

SNAPS

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LOUIS H. DAVIDSON,
1817 Clifton Avenue,
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND.

THE DEACON'S SON; OR, THE IMP OF THE VILLAGE.

BY TOM TEASER.



"Oh—oh! smell ther nasty feet!" came from under a big fat wench. "Great hebbin!" screamed she, jumping up. "Dere's a man under my petticoats." "Lemme get at him!" shouted her husband, pulling a razor and flourishing it aloft.

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LOUIS H. DAVIDSON,
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CHAPTER I.

Hold the forks, the spoons are coming,
Knives are on the way;
Hear de waiter wave der answer:
"Hey, dere, what d' yer say?"

The superintendent of the Five Points House of Industry touched the bell upon his desk in a hurry.

In an instant the two hundred bullet-headed, close-cropped lads stopped their vigorous singing of "Hold the Fort," and gazed around in a sort of "ha, ha, you did get caught" manner at one of their number.

The little fellow gazed at was an ordinary enough looking boy until they came to his face.

That face of his had evidently been carved out for an angel, and an Al angel at that, so mild and innocent and Sunday-school looking was it; especially the big blue eyes, which had a trick of gazing at everybody in the most childlike and bland manner imaginable.

Therefore it was no wonder that a thin old man, in a suit of rusty black, who hung on the edge of a chair on the platform, caressing a big blue cotton umbrella, opened his optics in surprise when the superintendent crossly called out: "James Bucktooth," and the aforesaid young cherub shuffled forward.

"James," said the superintendent, in stern tones, "how dare you sing such ribald words to a sacred tune?"

"Me!" repeated James. "I didn't. I was repeatin' my evenin' prayer to myself. I never sing at all, sir."

"Yes, sir, he did, sir," shrilly interrupted a tow-headed lad on the back seat. "I heard him."

"Yer a liar!" cried James, excitedly, turning toward the new accuser. "Jest you wait till arter school, and I'll make the wus kind uv putty outer dat wax nose of yours."

"That'll do," and the superintendent's hand came down on James' shoulder. "I heard you myself."

"Taffy?" asked Jim, mildly.

The superintendent frowned.

"No impudence," said he; "hold out your hand," and he grasped a malicious-looking ruler tightly.

"Git out, you mutton-tailed old snoozer!" muttered Jim, beneath his breath, as he extended one dirty palm with a most agonizing expression.

"Oh, sir!" moaned he, his blue eyes filling with tears, "it wasn't me! Dem ere duffers on the back seat are allers puttin' up jobs on me acos I'm good, an' one of dem did it."

"You can't play that old game on me, James," said the superintendent, decidedly. "I know you."

The ruler was raised aloft. In a second more it would have descended, when the old chap on the platform, who had been fidgeting around as if he had the cow-itch, suddenly interposed.

"Hold on, mister!" cried he.

The ruler dropped harmlessly, and the superintendent turned.

"I don't believe that little chap did spile the singing," continued the old rooster.

"Right every time, old cock-robin," encouraged Jim, coming out of his tears in a hurry; "hist it inter him heavy. You're a chirpin' in style, you are."

"Silence!" thundered the superintendent. Then, changing his tune, he remarked:

"You don't know the young rascal, Deacon Grimes. He's an artful little deceiver, and one of the worst boys in school."

"Dat's it," said Jim, defiantly; "dat's it, allus ruinin' of my kar-racker—sayin' as how I is the Nathan murderer, an' de chap dat kidnapped Charley Ross, an' all dat. Jess keep on; I ain't got no friends," and he wound up in a very effective snivel.

The snivel touched the deacon's heart.

"I don't calkerlate," said he, "that a boy with sich eyes an' sich a hansum face can be bad. You folks don't know how to manage him."

"Right again," came in Jim; "dey're oroide snide, dey is. Now, if I was with you, boss, I'd be a pair of twin angels with double-foldin' wings."

Deacon Grimes looked at him tenderly.

"I believe that you've got the making of a good Christian man in you, my boy," murmured he.

"Bet yer left lung I have," promptly answered Jim. "I'll change cars inter a fust-class man, with calcium lights in my shirt bosom; will skip the tra-la-la-loo with the gals, an' get full as a goat twice a week!"

"No—no; I mean a good man; missionary, for example."

"One of these chaps that wears a white choker every day, an' gets chawed up by the cannibals?"

"Not exactly," replied the deacon. "I see that you have got a sorter wrong idea of things. But I can excuse you, seeing how you have been brought up."

"Wuz brought up by a cock-eyed grandmother with a wax leg," assured Jimmy, winking in delight at his amused comrades on the benches.

"Poor chap," mused the deacon, "how would you like to come and live with me and be my boy?"

"Hang out with yer until I turn up my toes and sail for Jordan?"

"Hey?"

"Oh, you can't tumble for a pound of soap. I mean can I live always with yer?"

"If you please me."

"Bully for you!" and Jimmy in the exuberance of his joy tried to stand on his head.

"Stop that!" and the superintendent's rule came athwart of Jimmy's rear.

"Jest you keep off the grass," ordered Jimmy, sparring defiantly at his punisher. "You can't boss me any longer, for I'm the deacon's son; I is goin' to be a good little boy with clean hands and a pair of angel wings."

"Don't talk like that," the deacon commanded, "or I won't take you with me."

Jimmy instantly relapsed.

"Dat settles it; I am as mum as a mouse-trap," said he.

"You see," explained the deacon to the superintendent, "I am a widower without children, and the old home up at Turnover is getting sorter quiet. So, seeing that I'm pretty well fixed in this world's goods, I thought that I'd come to York an' adopt a boy, and bring him up for a missionary."

"Very laudable reasons," said the superintendent, "but I'm afraid that you'll have your hands full with Jimmy. He is a young villain."

"You don't know how to train him; I've got a system."

"Well, I hope you have, for your own sake."

"Has he any friends he wants to take leave of?"

"No relatives—a regular street Arab."

"Then I guess I'll take him with me right away."

"All right, James," said the superintendent; "get your clothes."

"Dese is all I have, sir. The rest uv them wuz eat up by parta-ter bugs in the Chicago fire."

"Then I must get you some," said the deacon, preparing to go; "bid good-by to your playmates."

Jimmy turned to the occupied row of benches.

"Tra-la-la, cullies," shouted he; "I'm a-skipin' de gutter for good. The next time you see me I'll be in a pulpit a-shootin' out gospel hymns. Au revolver."

Then the door closed on the little rogue and his adopted father; the superintendent gave out another hymn, and the daily routine of the Five Points House of Industry went on just as if Jimmy Grimes, nee Bucktooth, had not left it forever.

But we'll skate back to our hero.

Leading the deacon by the hand, he waltzed him to Centre street, and hired a Fourth avenue horse car.

Getting out at Canal street, they entered a large ready-made clothing store.

"Suit for this boy," said the deacon, to a stuck-up young clerk, who supported himself and a pair of paralyzed sideboards on seven dollars a week.

"Cheap suit?" asked the clerk, glancing superciliously at Jimmy's rags.

"Not much, Charley, my dear," responded Jimmy, in a familiar tone that made the clerk feel sick; "none of yer brown-paper clothes for me! I want a suit from the top shelf, with a place to carry a pop and a hole fer a bowie knife."

The clerk slammed the clothing around lively.

"Pears ter me yer liver can't be in good workin' order," cheerfully observed Jimmy, "or mebbe dem sluggers (side-whiskers) are a-rotting. Better put dem in a hot-house."

"You're an impudent young fool," snarled the clerk, tossing over a suit; "try that on."

"All right; jest suck yer thumb till I scoop inter dem," and Jimmy cheerfully tried them.

"Dey're top-heavy in the seat," he criticised, "an' I could camp out in the coat. Jest rattle out another suit, and show yer boss that yer earnin' yer salary."

By this time the other clerks that were idling around were all laughing, and the chap who was waiting on Jimmy wished that he had gone and buried himself before he attempted the job.

"Here!" he snapped, throwing Jimmy some more garments.

"Allus be polite an' sociable, an' you'll marry a rich gal with a paper bustle an' ten cents in the sandbank."

"Shut up!"

"Couldn't," replied Jimmy, getting the second suit upon him. "You'd better keep your mad down, or I'll whisper to your boss, an' make him give you the lightning bounce. Den you'll have to walk around the streets selling fly-paper."

"James," softly interposed the deacon, for the first time since his entrance into the store, "a soft answer turneth away wrath. Remember that, my son. How do the clothes fit you?"

Jimmy took a bird's-eye view of himself before the looking-glass.

"Bang up. Anybody would take me for a Murray Hill-er," said he, surveying his nobby appearance with great delight.

The deacon paid for the clothes, and the two turned to go.

But Jimmy could not resist the temptation of giving the badgered clerk something to remember him by.

"Da-da, old tape-measure," said he. "Keep yer stomick level, and maybe by and by I'll send for you by a carrier pigeon to fill the situation I've got for you."

"What sort of a situation?" grinned another clerk.

"Bottling up dew with a hand-spike."

A roar of laughter followed, during which Jimmy slid out gayly. The deacon took him to task, when they were comfortably seated in a stage on their way to the Grand Central depot, after Jimmy had been furnished with a complete outfit of everything connected with a young gentleman's wardrobe.

"James," said the deacon, "you must break yourself of one habit; the vile, detestable practice of using slang. I know that it is only a custom of yours, and you mean nothing by it, but still some of the folks up in Turnover would be greatly horrified to hear the low phrases which you employ."

Jimmy heard him through like a young angel.

"I'll brace right up," answered he, "and those 'ere moral folks'll take me for the boss of a Sunday-school, with a prayer-meetin' twice a week."

"There," groaned Deacon Grimes, "that is slang."

"Nary; dat's dictshunary langwidge."

"Well, you must stop it, anyhow."

"Den I will, arter this. Cough accordin' to de catechism, and spit by the hymn-book. Dat's de kind of a turkey-cock I'll be."

Just then the depot loomed up before them with its huge red walls.

The deacon and Jimmy got out of the stage, and in a few minutes were seated in the train which was to bring them to Turnover.

About evening they arrived at their destination.

Turnover was a typical New England village.

It contained a Methodist church, a darky ditto, a couple of stores, the postoffice, railroad station, school house, and perhaps a couple of hundred houses. And now you know the place where the deacon's son was to attain his justly earned title of the Imp of the Village.

The deacon jumped off the car as agilely as an old rooster of fifty-five or sixty could, and Jimmy followed suit.

Standing up the street a little way from the depot was a lumbering black Rockaway wagon, drawn by two solemn-looking mules.

Jimmy gazed curiously at this stylish turnout.

"Guess der must a bin a plantin' round here," observed he.

"A what?" asked the deacon.

"A funeral, in high-tone talk."

"Why?"

"'Cos dere's der hearse up yonder."

The deacon gave vent to a noiseless chuckle.

"That 'ere is my kerridge," said he.

Then he called out loudly:

"Pomp, wake up!"

There was a sort of upheaval in the bottom of the carriage, and then a wondering darky slowly appeared from under the seat.

"Come, hurry along," continued the deacon.

"Shuffle out, dere, blackin'-brush, an' don't chatter yer teeth so long," supplemented Jimmy.

With a look of astonishment on his sable countenance, the darky obeyed the two orders, and tooled the reluctant mules up to his master.

"Who's dat wif you?" asked he, pointing to Jimmy.

"My son."

"Go 'way, deacon, youse foolin'; you ain't married."

"My adopted son."

"Oh, an'—an' am I ter mind him, too, jess as if he was your real chile?"

"Of course."

"That's the trump card," put in Jimmy; "the old man is stut-terin' on the square. If I tell yer to stand on yer ear and skin yer eyebrow you've got to skin. Savvey?"

"What's dat, chile?" stammered the perplexed nig.

"Hayseed on a fork. Tumble now?"

But Pomp didn't.

"Dat 'ar chile crazy?" asked he confidentially of the deacon.

"No; it's only an evil way he has of speaking. I'll break him of it by and by," said the deacon.

"Will yer, though?" chuckled Jimmy, aside. "I guess not."

"Get in, Jimmy," ordered his left-handed parent.

Jimmy obeyed, and tumbled in beside Pomp. Before he reached home he had succeeded in making excellent friends with the darky.

The deacon's home was a beautiful one to the town-bred eye of the city lad. The old wooden house, half buried in surrounding foliage, the quaint barns and out-buildings, the ancient well-sweep, and last but not least, a noisy little creek that dashed recklessly through the barn-yard, all combined to amaze and delight Jimmy.

"Strike me with a smellin'-salt," resolved he, "if I won't be a reg'lar wipe-ye-nose good little duffer. Won't sass, or lie, or fight or nothin'."

But he soon forgot his resolve. After supper he went to the little hut that Pomp inhabited, for Pomp was a gay young bachelor.

Pomp received him gleefully.

"I've got sumthin' to show to yer, chile," said he.

"What?"

"Jess you guess?"

"Horse?"

"No, sah."

"Cow?"

"Wrong agin. Gib up?"

"Yes."

"Well, chile," said Pomp, in delight, "it's a poll-parrot."

"Bully! Trot it out!"

Pomp dived into the recesses of his house, and emerged with a wire cage containing a vicious-looking, bald-headed parrot.

"Dere," cried he, setting down the cage, "dere's Debbil. Call him Debbil, 'cos he swears like the old boy."

"Blast your blasted liver!" came in guttural tones from the parrot, as if in confirmation of Pomp's statement.

"Dere he is; dat's him ebery time," grinned Pomp, in delight.

"Shut up, you white-livered swab!" commanded Devil.

Jimmy enjoyed the bird hugely.

"Where did yer pick up dat Bowery nightingale?" asked he.

"Of a tramp. He lemme hab him for a dollar."

"Well, I wish I had him."

Jimmy loafed around the hut a little while longer. By and by he noticed that Pomp was beginning to get inside of his store clothes.

"Where you going?" he inquired.

"To prayer-meetin', chile, down to Brudder Jefferson's."

"Kin I go 'long?"

"Ax yer fader. I'd just as leave took youse, if youse'll be a good boy."

"Jest clear yer mind from that. I'll be a second-hand angel."

"Den go in an' ax de deacon. I doan't want de 'sponsibility ob takin' you wifout commission."

Jimmy went in the house, found the deacon, and easily obtained his permission.

Pomp was already moving down the road in all the glory of store

clothes when Jimmy rejoined him, first stopping in the darky's shanty for a moment.

"What did you go there for, chile?" asked Pomp, suspiciously.

"Forgot my wipe."

"Did you see de parrot?"

"Oh, yes; he was cocked up on de winder-sill, axin' a blessin' ober a horse-fly," replied Jimmy, hanging on with one hand to a suspicious-looking bundle under his coat.

They went along for about a mile, and finally reached the negro church, a barn-like structure on the Boston and New York turn-pike.

Here was where the prayer-meeting was to explode, and in consequence any number of dandy coons and wooly belles had assembled around the stoop, waiting for the circus to begin.

"Who's dat mutton-headed nigger with the circular-saw legs an' coffee-pot stummick?" inquired Jimmy of his companion.

"Hush—dat's Elder Jefferson," answered Pomp.

"De boss praying band?"

"He's de presiding elder, if dat's what you mean."

Just then the crowd begun moving into the church.

Pomp took a front seat, but Jimmy didn't see it.

"Nixey," said he, "I'll board on the back bench for a little while; I'm orful bashful, I is." So the little rogue sat down on the rear bench, and waited till the congregation got seated.

Then, unobserved, for he was alone on the bench, he pulled something out from under his coat.

That something was a ruffled mass of feathers, bald head, and scranny legs. In fact, it was nothing less than "Devil," Pomp's parrot.

"There," whispered Jimmy, clutching him by the neck and holding him on his knee, "jest you keep yer coffee-mill shut till the clam-bake commences."

It commenced pretty soon.

After singing a hymn which had something about all the prophets from Moses to Micah in it and a rousing chorus in the bargain, in which the darkies joined until the sweat ran down into their shoes, Elder Jefferson arose in the pulpit.

"Bruddern an' sistern," commenced he, squinting around like a cock-eyed sparrow, "I am glad to see so many heah, coming fo' to serve de Lawd on this lubly ebenin'. De text from which I shall obstruct you dis ebenin' is—"

"Oh, stop dat, Gawge!" suddenly rang out a squeaky voice.

The elder stopped, and looked reproachfully around. That was what everybody was doing.

"If you don't stop tickling me, I'll tell ma," shrieked the same voice, evidently from the back part of the church.

"Whoebber dat is should know better," said Elder Jefferson. "Dis am no place for lubben."

"Dry up! Hit him with a beer mug!" came the voice again.

"Does any gemman know who dat is dat's disturbin' de worship?" asked the elder.

Nobody knew.

They looked all around, but everybody appeared to be as innocent as a mosquito in December. True, they peered rather hard at Jimmy; but that young man seemed to be deeply interested in something on the ceiling.

If they could only have seen beneath the seat!

There, clasped tightly between his knees, was the parrot, trying his best to think up a few more swear words to astonish the congregation with.

By and by he collared them.

"Darn your eyes!" roared he, just as the elder was about to proceed.

"Dat's a blasphemous oath!" roared the shocked brother.

"Go club yourself!"

"What?"

"Set 'em up ag'in, boys!"

"Dis is disgraceful!"

"Dig his heart out! Chuck him under the table!"

"I'll hab dat yer pusson put out de church," threatened the elder.

"No, you won't! You're drunk—drunk—drunk! Take a cracker. Ha—ha—ha!"

By this time everybody was wild with excitement.

The men and women were standing up on the benches, and Elder Jefferson had elevated himself on his tip-toes; but still he could not see anything, or discover who the culprit was.

"It must be de debel!" suggested a withered old wench, a colored old maid.

"Tain't; where's your baby? Cut his throat with a carving-knife, did you?" howled the parrot, in demoniac glee.

The old maid gave a screech, and toppled over in a dead faint.

"She's dead!"

"Fainted!"

"Fan her."

"Carry her home."

Such were a few of the exclamations uttered by those around.

"Take her teeth out, blast her!" screamed Devil, ruffling all his feathers, and trying to bite big pieces out of Jimmy's leg.

"Dat's somebody hid under de back seat," announced a nig.

"You lie! Nigger—nigger, never die, black face and chiny eye," chanted the satanical parrot.

"Oh, who can it be?" moaned the elder.

"Tom Collins."

"Who?"

"Charley Ross, cuss your black skin!"

"Where are you?"

"In hell. Oh, fire—fire! Kiss her quick, Charley, tickle her under the chin!"

"I'm sure dat's some bad man under de back seat," reiterated the nig who had said so before.

"Pull down your vest," advised Devil; "hire a hall! Praise God!"

The circus was getting a little too interesting for Jimmy. In vain he tried to quiet the parrot by choking him. It wouldn't work.

Devil was fully excited, had all his steam up, and was going in for a racket.

"Boil the devil," squeaked he; "fry him for dinner! Damn—damn—damn! Shake 'em lively, double sixes. Amen!"

Determined to convince himself whether or not his suspicions were correct, the darky who had last spoken came prancing down the aisle.

Jimmy saw him just in time. He gave Devil a chuck along the floor for ten feet or so, and when the darky got to Jimmy there was nothing suspicious to be seen.

"See anything, Brudder Smith?" asked the elder.

"Nothing, sah!"

"That's a fib. I'm here! Oh—oh! smell ther nasty feet!" came from under a big fat wench who sat three or four benches ahead of Jimmy.

"Great Hebben!" screamed she, jumping up like a top-heavy sky-rocket, "dere's a man under my petticoats!"

"Lemme get at him!" shouted her husband, pulling a razor out of his boot and flourishing it aloft.

"Brace up and pray for the beer!" issued from behind a dashing young widow, who instantly went into a kicking fit.

The bucks were hunting here and there for the supposed man, the wenches were howling and crying, and, to crown all, good Elder Jefferson was praying at the top of his voice, while Jimmy was most dying with laughter.

But it was soon to end.

Pomp, who had been cudgeling his brain to imagine what caused the row, gave a howl of dismay, and darting across the aisle, nabbed a bald-headed parrot which was crawling up a chair.

"Fo' de Lawd!" exclaimed he, "it's my parrot. How de debbil did he git heah?"

"Swum! Change cars for Albany!" confidentially informed Devil, winking his bead-like eyes.

"Dat ar white boy brought him. I seed him hab de parrot under he coat," lisped a little darky, pointing to Jimmy.

This was enough for the deacon's son.

With a whoop of triumph he scooted out of the door toward home, satisfied with kicking up a high old jim-jam on the very first night of his arrival in Turnover.

CHAPTER II.

Well, Jimmy was not in any hurry to get home.

He anticipated that the deacon would hear of his little picnic and feel it his duty to punish him.

So, therefore, it was not until ten o'clock in the evening that he showed up to the deacon.

The deacon and Pomp were sitting on the front stoop, and Jimmy felt sort of sea-sick as he approached.

"Oh, Mas'r Jimmy, youse done gone an' done it," Pomp said, sorrowfully.

"Done what?" innocently asked Jimmy.

"I'se a lost church member," moaned Pomp; "de bruddern an' sistern all swar dat I knew you had de parrot, an' dey 'fuse to 'sociate wif me."

"So you did," said Jimmy, promptly.

"Wha's dat?" gasped Pomp, stunned by Jimmy's perfidy; "wha's dat you say?"

"Didn't you tell me to take that 'er parrot to the nigger church an' kick up a resurrection? Of course yer did," said Jimmy.

The deacon pricked up his ears.

"You never told me that you had a hand in the disgraceful occurrence, Pomp," said he.

Pomp looked as if a wandering thunderbolt had put him out at first base.

"I didn't—dat chile's a lyin'," urged he. "I'se speakin' de sol-lum trufe; I don't know nuffin' about de parrot, 'cept dat your son brought him to de church an' he raise de almighty debbil."

"An' wuzn't you a-sittin' next to him a-pinchin' his ear an' a-whisperin' to him to swear his head off?" charged Jimmy, bold as a brass lion.

Pomp groaned aloud.

"De sinfulness ob dis wicked world," he sighed. "Chile, you am goin' straight to de lake ob fire an' brimstone!"

"Fashionable summer resort all the year round," laughed Jimmy.

"That'll do," interrupted the deacon, "no trifling. James, I did intend punishing you severely, but now I am not quite sure which is in the wrong, you or Pomp. Come in the house."

Jimmy obeyed, a look of calm content on his guileless-looking face, while Pomp put for his own residence, mad enough to pick a fight with a stone wall.

Next morning Jimmy climbed up just in time for breakfast.

"Jimmy," said the deacon, as our hero took his seat at the table, "this is Mary Ann, our girl,"—and he pointed to a brown, red-checked Irish girl, who was wrestling with the fried potatoes.

"Hope yer ain't got a feller, Mary Ann, me dear," observed Jimmy. "I wouldn't mind runnin' you myself. Remember dat an' save me some spring chicken out uv yer tooth."

Mary Ann blushed, smiled, and left the room giggling.

"He is a rare little gentleman," was her inward comment.

But the deacon didn't like it as much as Mary Ann.

"Never be familiar with servants," said he.

"How do ye mean familiar?" asked Jimmy.

"Why, in talkin' nonsense—admitting them to your own level."

"Dat settles it," replied Jimmy, putting half a mackerel into his food-receiver; "no more familiarity for this city clothes-pin. When I want Mary Ann I'll fire off a pistol for her, write what I want ter say on pink paper, and hand it to her on the end of a clothes-pole. How's dat?"

"Stuff!" replied the deacon, and then he gave Jimmy a long lecture, to which the little rascal listened very patiently, and at the end promised to be the very best kind of a boy.

After that he strolled out into the yard.

There was a sharp-looking man there, accompanied by a negro.

Jimmy recognized the negro at once. 'Twas Elder Jefferson.

As Jimmy walked down the path the elder held up his hand and exclaimed:

"Dere he is; dat's de young Philistine who desecrated de house ob worship."

Jimmy stopped short.

"Wuz you chirpin' to me, old woolly-head?" inquired he of the elder.

That worthy darky nodded.

"Yes, young man," said he, "de wicked shall be stopped short in dere vicious career."

"How much do you charge for it?"

"Charge fo' what?"

"That glue that you're givin' me?"

The elder groaned aloud.

"De wust case ob depravity dat I eber witnessed," moaned he. "Dat boy will end on de gallows. Officer, do youse duty." At this the sharp-looking man, who previous to this had remained quiet, stepped out and tapped Jimmy on the shoulder.

"James Grimes," he said, unfolding a legal-looking paper, "I arrest you for breaking up a religious meeting at the African Methodist Episcopal Church last evening."

Most boys in such an event as this would have turned pale and burst out crying.

But Jimmy didn't.

On the contrary, he was just as cool as a cucumber—and a big cucumber at that.

"By the almighty Bolivar!" cried he, "I'll git square on that snide old nigger with the whale's belly if I git sent up fer life."

Lowering his head, Jimmy charged forward like an animated battering-ram, in spite of the officer's attempt to prevent him, and struck Elder Jefferson amidship with his sturdy little cocoanut.

The elder's reception-room for food caved in like a collapsed balloon, the briny tears came to his eyes, and he clasped his arms around his waist and went through a war-dance which would have brought fits on any looking-on Indian.

"Gorramighty! Oh, Lord!" howled he, executing a cancan step; "I is killed—murdered. Help—help! I'se gwine ter climb der golden ladder! Fo' de Lawd's sake arrest dat boy!"

The officer, who, by the way, was only a deputy sheriff, succeeded in grabbing Jimmy by the collar.

"Now, young man," panted he, "I guess I've got you."

"Nixey," cried Jimmy, slipping out of his coat like an eel, and, darting between the deputy's legs; "sold ag'in! Why don't yer stand up like a little man?"

The deputy didn't answer, for Jimmy's action had caused his feet to make a frantic attempt to fly heavenward, and brought his beam-end kerchunk against the hard gravel walk.

"Yah!" taunted Jimmy, dancing around in his shirt sleeves, "why didn't yer scrape the butter off yer feet afore you tried ter ketch me?"

"I'll—I'll have you hanged!" stuttered the enraged deputy, feeling as if he had come into collision with a fast express train.

"Yes, sah, hang him!" chimed in Elder Jefferson, slowly regaining his peace of mind—and stomach. "Dat 'ar chile is de debbil himself, shuah!"

"Here, what's all this row about?" asked the deacon, suddenly appearing from the house, from whence he had been attracted by the racket.

"Two gemmen drunk," answered Jimmy, cheeky as ever. "Laid themselves down on the walk to fight 'tata-bugs."

Elder Jefferson groaned in dismay. "Dat's a wicked falsehood, sah," said he; "we is come in de cause of justice."

"Friend of theirs that runs a peanut stand in the Bowery," explained Jimmy; "he's got six months for stealing fog off the ocean, an' dey want you to bail him out."

"How?" asked the deacon, in perplexity.

"Let me explain," said the deputy, gathering himself up, and darting a glance at Jimmy, as if to say, "I'll fix you, young man."

"Well, explain then."

"Doubtless you have heard, deacon, that your adopted son raised a shameful muss at the negro prayer-meeting last night?"

"Yes."

"Well, they have got out a warrant for his arrest; I came here to serve it, and he assaulted me in the execution of my duty."

"Mose killed me, too," put in Brother Jefferson; "de cullud flock hab well nigh lost der shepherd. He butted me, sah—butted me in de belly!"

"James," said the deacon, sternly, "do these gentlemen speak correctly?"

"They is whispering the sweet truth. I did have a sort of amateur circus with 'em," replied Jimmy, who wasn't afraid to give every one their just due.

"When is he to appear before the court?" asked Deacon Grimes.

"This morning."

"What time?"

"Right away."

"Then put on your coat, James, and go with these gentlemen."

"Shan't I put on my black suit, carry a weepin' willer pocket-handkerchief, an' tell the judge dat I've just lost a couple of mothers in a steamboat explosion?" asked Jimmy.

"No, sir," answered the deacon; "this is no time for fooling. You've disgraced your name enough already. Suppose that you get sent to jail?"

"S'pose I do?" Jimmy cheerfully replied; "I'd look so nobby in a striped suit an' bare-necked hair dat the jailer's daughter would get mashed on me, and we'd elope for California. See, old duke?"

"That will do. Are you ready?"

"Solid—'cept I ain't got on my diamond bracelet."

"You'll have iron ones before you get through," growled the deputy.

Jimmy squinted comically at him. "If I had a mouth as big as yours I'd go an' hire myself out as a cave," retorted he.

"Silence!" thundered the deacon.

"Don't know where he is, sir," said Jimmy, his natural brassy disposition getting the best of him. "If yer want him pertickular, I'll drop him a postal card."

The deacon said nothing aloud, but he muttered something about a "thrashing," and ordered the deputy to take Jimmy away instantly.

The man started to obey, and for the second time laid his hand on the boy's collar.

Quicker than lightning our little hero jerked himself away, and exclaimed:

"Hands off! Leave me alone an' I'll trot along like a wooden lamb, but lay those fork-holders on me ag'in, an' that head of yours 'll look like a soap-box struck by a cannon ball!"

The deputy desisted and let Jimmy have his own way. Indeed, there was something in the boy's flashing eye and determined, resolute bearing that awed him.

"Come along, then," said he, shortly, and led the way out of the gate, Jimmy following, and the deacon and Elder Jefferson bringing up the van.

The procession moved on in silence until the court-house—used for fairs, parties, balls, and almost everything else of a social or political nature—was reached.

Upstairs they went to the large room where the trial was held.

The news of Jimmy's crime and arrest had spread all over the town with that rapidity which gossip always attains in a small country place, and consequently Jimmy had a first-class audience to witness his first appearance at the bar.

It was a sort of mixed-up audience, too—such as could have been gathered together in any New England village.

There were farmers and mechanics, retired merchants and shirt-sleeved oystermen, "hired men" and sturdy farm laborers, and last, but principally first, any number of negroes.

Jimmy walked into the court as if he owned the whole building and intended buying the rest of the town.

"Who's the commodore in the white tie a-holdin' down the high stool?" asked he of the deputy.

"Squire Jenkins."

"Who's he?"

"The judge—the man that's going to settle your hash!"

"Not much! Wait till yer hear me give him sponge cake. Him an' me will be chuckin' for drinks afore this trial is over."

"James Grimes," suddenly called the worthy gentleman alluded to in a very hoarse voice, as he put on his spectacles.

"Dat's what I put on my visitin' keards," chirped Jimmy.

"What kin I do fer yer?"

"Lawyer," commanded his honor, "read the indictment."

In obedience, an animated corn-stalk, with eye-glasses and a white choker, who was retained by Elder Jefferson and company, got up and waded through ten sheets of legal verbiage, to the simple effect that James Grimes had disturbed a religious meeting, and should therefore be punished to the full extent of the law.

Jimmy was dumfounded when he heard this read.

"This 'ere's a skin game!" shouted he; "I didn't do all of that stuff. What's that four-eyed ramrod giving me, anyhow?"

"Hush!" admonished the deacon, coming to his side, and then he explained the matter.

"Is that it?" sighed Jimmy, in great relief; "blamed ef I didn't think that dey had lugged me for bilin' a hull family in hot gore!"

"James Grimes," came his honor's voice again, "take your seat in that railing," pointing to a partially railed off space of four by six.

"Cert'nly," responded Jimmy, doing as he was told and settling himself in the narrow space; "dis is all O. K. for me, but it would be wuss than settin' on a red-hot stove fer a fat man. What's the next move?"

"Keep still," ordered his honor, regarding the remarkable prisoner curiously. "How old are you?"

"Twelve, with the froth off."

"Your residence?"

"At the deacon's palace, third story, front room."

A burst of laughter followed this answer, and his honor smiled, too.

Jimmy noticed it, and chuckled to himself.

"Ther commodore's on my side," he murmured, "an' darn the niggers. Dey kin go an' make blubber-rubber out of demselves."

Then he braced himself up to answer the next question.

"Are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty!" shouted he, with all his might. "Jest put that

down with a blue pencil, will yer, so dat there will be no backslidin' 'bout it?"

"That's sufficient," said his honor, making a suspicious attempt to straighten his face. "Let the prosecution begin."

Up jumped the animated corn-stalk, waved his hand aloft in the air, and commenced the most spread-eagle oration imaginable, in the course of which he compared Jimmy to Nero, Rubenstein, and all the other unpopular gentlemen, while Elder Jefferson and his flock were made out to only need a coat of whitewash and a pair of wings to become angels in good standing.

As soon as he had finished Jimmy was upon his feet.

"Yer honor," cried he, addressing the court, "that 'ere cove's the wust liar that ever wuz. Jest let me ketch him down in the Five Points and I'll make him look like broken taffy, the darned old——"

"Silence!" ordered the court. "You will have an opportunity to defend yourself later. Call the witnesses."

"Elder Jefferson!" piped the animated corn-stalk.

The elder stalked up as solemn as a bandy-legged owl and took the stand.

"Dis heah am de way it was," explained he. "De gospel meeting had but jess commenced las' evening when I was disturbed by somebody calling me names. Fo' a long time I failed to discover the culprit. De calling ob names and profanity continued, an' de whole congregation was in an uproar. But bime-by de offender was found to be a mis'able parrot dat de prisoner had brought to de sanctuary fo' de purpose ob disturbin' de meetin'. Deyfore I had him 'rested. Dat am all."

"Kin I cross-examine him?" asked Jimmy, who from frequently attending the Tombs police court and watching the shyster lawyers there had attained quite a little knowledge of legal proceedings.

"Certainly," smiled his honor.

Jimmy was one big grin as he leaned over the railing and commenced his cross-examination.

"Witness," said he in the severest tone he could assume, "you take your dying oath on a pot of bean bags, cross your heart and hope that you'll never go to the nigger heaven that you will tell me the solemn truth?"

"Yes, sah."

"Sure?"

"Certin, sah."

"Den we'll begin. How old are you?"

"Forty."

"Forty what?"

"Five."

"Dere," exclaimed Jimmy, triumphantly, "he's beginnin' ter get shaky already. Fust said that he was only forty and then whispered forty-five. There's a ragged old liar fer you. But I'll keep on. Witness, did yer ever hook the festive chick?"

"Do what, sir?"

"Steal chickens—rec'lect, sir, dat you're on yer oath, an' if yer tell a lie yer won't need yer heavy flannels arter you're dead."

The elder hesitated.

The sweat stood on his forehead, and he felt as ticklish as if he was walking across Niagara Falls on a hair-pin.

"To lie or not to lie," was what was the matter with him.

But the truth got the victory, and he groaned out:

"I acknowledge, sah, to gittin' away wif one, but he was de cran-niest leetle rooster you eber saw, an' sides he was lame in the left leg."

"That wasn't his fault," said Jimmy; "yer orter have bought him a gold-mounted crutch, an' set him up in bizness a peddlin' watches. S'pose yer killed him?"

"Wrung his neck."

"Did, hey? Now prepare yourself; I've got another stunner for yer. How many wives have yer got?"

"None."

"Yer hain't?"

"No—o," stammered the elder, who owned most of his popularity among the female members of his church to his being, as he said, an unmarried man.

But Jimmy suspected that he wasn't, and accordingly tried a new dodge.

"Then that 'ere big wench wuz a prewaricating when she told me this morning dat she wuz Missus Jefferson?"

"What kind ob a lookin' cuilud lady?" asked the elder, trembling.

"Gay old gal, with number eleven shoes, an' a nose dat looked as if it had been mashed in by a pile-driver," answered Jimmy, at a venture.

"Yes, dat's her," groaned the elder.

"Who?"

"Missus Jefferson—I tole her to stay in New York, while I was playing on de hayseed nigs, but she allus would bust up eberything. Whar am she now?"

"Give it up, I never saw her, me elderberry. Wuz only trying to make you give yerself away, an' I succeeded," grinned Jimmy; "you're a nice old chiney-monk, ain't you?"

But the elder did not reply.

He was a little bit too mad. If he could have got up and killed flies with Jimmy, or used him to chop wood, he might have felt better.

But as he couldn't, the only way he could get rid of his wrath was to swear to himself until his throat swelled like a brimstone lane.

"I'm done with you," said our hero; "now trot out the other witnesses."

Elder Jeerson ambled away, and went and sat down in the loneliest corner imaginable, wishing that a friendly streak of lightning

would knock the whole proceedings into a cocked hat, while the other witnesses came up and gave their testimony.

It was all merely a rehash of Elder Jefferson's, and Jimmy forebore to examine them.

"Don't mind 'em, judge," said he, loftily; "most of dem are boarding at de lunatic asylum, and dey don't know what dey're saying. Jest play jackstraws or sumthing till they get through."

Then when the witnesses had finished, Jimmy was on deck again.

"Kin I defend myself now?" he politely inquired.

"You may," replied the judge.

Raising his hand and working it violently in the air as he had seen the shysters do, Jimmy commenced:

"Gentlemen and ladies of the jury! You see before you an innocent boy that wuz born without father or mother, charged with goin' ter a nigger church an' kicking up a bald-headed rumpus. Gentlemen and ladies, the charge is false; it was the parrot that raised the circus, and not me. But you say, 'Elder Jefferson, the boss scripture shouter of the colored saints, says that it's you.' S'pose'n he does; he's a nice man to run a church, ain't he, an old black chromo that owns to killing a poor lame rooster that didn't have any friends, an' also to keeping the fact of his having a wife away from the lovely ladies who composed his congregation. Ah, ladies an' gentlemen, how kin you believe sich a good little boy as me, as kin sing all the Moody and Sankey hymns backward in my sleep, to be guilty of doing sich a wicked thing as upsettin' the prayer meeting. Ladies and gentlemen, I am done."

And Jimmy sat down.

A buzz of approbation ran around the court-room, and his honor said something to one of his clerks, and smiled.

Then bending over his desk, he said, not unkindly:

"James Grimes, the court finds you—not guilty!"

In a minute, Jimmy had waltzed out of his place of confinement and grasped the judge's hand.

"Commodore," shouted he, "you're a brick, an' if I had a sweet gal daughter I'd let you marry her, an' gib yer my blessing. Wobble paws."

The judge laughingly acceded to his request, and remarked:

"You're a smart young chap."

"You bet," replied Jimmy; "you see I'm the deacon's son—reg'lar offen boy," and he winked slyly.

Just then the deacon himself arrived, and hand-in-hand the pair made for home, Jimmy being regarded on all sides as the biggest hero there had ever been in Turnover.

There was one man, though, who got the worst of the trial.

That man was Elder Jefferson. The news that he was already married had dashed the hopes of various colored young ladies to the ground.

And they felt mad about it. Consequently, when the elder started to come out of the court-room, various murmurs arose:

"Shoot de rascal!"

"Hit de ole hypocrite!"

"We'll marry him!"

"Tear his ole wool!"

"Scratch de nigger's face!"

"Scoop his eyes out!"

These and other equally painful exclamations were uttered by the disappointed colored darlings, and all at once they made a general attack on the elder.

They drew war-maps on his face with their nails, tore his wool into tooth-wadding, dragged his whiskers to bits, and otherwise made him look as if a brick house had fallen on him.

Then they abandoned him in disgust, and he took the first freight train for New York.

He had got enough of Turnover.

Verily, the deacon's son had settled his hash.

CHAPTER III.

For days after the trial Jimmy was the hero of the village.

Wherever he went he received a kind greeting and an admiring glance; but still he remained the same old hairpin, and was not spoiled worth a cent.

Right next to the deacon's was a boarding-house run by a vine-gar-faced and pepper-tongued old maid named Alvira Simmons; and in summer time she generally had her house full of boarders—mostly city folks.

The summer when Jimmy made his appearance in Turnover was not an exception to the general rule, and the Simmons homestead was packed to repletion with perspiring "Yorkers."

There were several boys about Jimmy's age among them, and one lad in particular whom James did not take much stock in.

His name was Tommy Fish, and he was one of those nobby, airy chaps who strut around the country, imagining that all the country boys are mad with envy and all the country girls dead gone on him.

Now, there was a mischievous little rascal, Bob Hoyt, a Turn-over boy, whom Jimmy had struck up an intimacy with.

Tommy Fish kept always bothering them—interfering in their plans and sport in his arrogant way; and at last Jimmy determined to give him a lesson.

"I'll fix him," said he.

"Ain't you afraid?" asked Bob, impressed by Tommy's fierce ways.

"Not much," grinned Jimmy. "He's all mouth, like a big cat-fish. Hit him once an' he'll look like a busted bladder."

Not ten minutes after the conversation above, which took place in the deacon's yard, one fine afternoon, Tommy appeared in company with a toady named Rube Benton.

"What are you fellers doing?" inquired he.

"Dad's give us a job," said Jimmy, soberly.

"What doing?"

"Filling gas-bags. Lemme blow you up."

Bob laughed, and Tommy blustered.

"Look here, young feller," cried he, "you're getting too fresh."

"I know it," retorted Jimmy. "It takes all the salt in town to keep you fresh."

"You better not rile me."

"Don't want to—you ain't a pond, are you?"

"That'll do; just let me get mad, and I'll hurt you. I've got a pair of boxing gloves, an' I can punch your head into plum-pudding in a minute, if I want to."

"Bad man, ain't you?"

"You bet. I've kicked eighteen country squashes since I've been up here," blowed Tommy.

"Den I guess I won't fool with you," said Jimmy; "but I would like to put on the boxing gloves for a little while."

Tommy bit right away.

"I'll box with you," he said, confident that he had picked up a flat.

"You won't hit me hard?" asked Jimmy, with an ill-suppressed look of mischief in his blue eyes.

"Oh, no!"

"Strike out as if you were boxing with a glass image?"

"You bet!"

"Then I guess that I'll try you once, though I expect dat I'll have to carry myself home in my hand, an' get stuck together with flour paste. Run up to the house and get the boxing gloves."

"You go, Rube, and I'll let you have one of my cigars some day," said Tom; and toady Rube obeyed, scoting up to the house on a dead run.

In his absence Tommy told the boys fairy tales about how he had gone on a bust, and caved in the skulls of seven policemen, who had attempted to arrest him, with his diamond ring; and other such yarns.

But by and by Rube returned, out of breath, but bearing the gloves.

Tommy slung Jimmy a pair, and that little man immediately had a small garden-party putting them on.

"Is this the way?" he asked, seeming as innocent as a clam, as he held up his hands with the gloves on backward.

"No," laughed Tommy; "turn them around."

Then he remarked, in an undertone, to Rube:

"Do you want to see that young rooster swallow his teeth?"

"Yes."

"Then watch me mash him in the mouth. He's a country duffer, he is."

You see Tommy did not know that Jimmy was a city boy, like himself, and he wasn't also aware that the deacon's son was a rattling little boxer for his size and weight, for he had learned the art of self-defense among the Bowery boys, and could walk away from two like Tommy.

But Tommy did not know it, and he imagined that he had a soft thing—a regular fancy fry on toast, and imagined that he could start a small hospital with Jimmy.

"Come out here and toe the mark," said he to Jimmy, as soon as the latter got his gloves on all right.

Jimmy sauntered out, performed the act, and put up his mawleys.

"Please don't hit me too hard—it makes my head ache," whined he.

"I'll put another head on you," murmured Tommy. "Are you ready?"

"I s'pose so."

"Take care, then!" and Tommy launched a blow that threatened to knock Jimmy's mouth around to the back of his neck.

But somehow the blow was parried, and the first thing Tommy knew one of his eyes felt as if a thunderbolt had called and left its card.

"Darnation!" shouted he, clapping his hand over his eye. "How the deuce did you do that?"

"Hand slipped," answered Jimmy, innocently. "Did it hurt you?"

"Hurt me! Blame it, it feels as if a horse had kicked me!"

"I'm sorry."

"Sorry be darned! I'm going to knock that pug nose of yours up through your hat!" and the enraged Tommy went in as if he meant what he said.

But he got sold again.

Jimmy's hard little fist flew through the air, and before the bully could imagine whether a telegraph pole had fallen down and hit him, or a mad bull caressed his rear, he was sitting down on a manure pile, with a nose that looked like a crimson waterfall.

Toady Rube ran quickly to him.

"You've killed him!" cried he to Jimmy.

"Killed your grandmother," replied Jimmy, knocking a rooster head over heels off of the fence with one of the boxing gloves. "I've just fixed him up for a light-house. Plant him out in the Sound, and that nose of his will make a bully lamp."

"I'll get square with you," threatened Tom, wiping his gory face with the back of his hand.

"Giving me goose grease now," laughed Jimmy. "You better go home and tell your mother she wants you."

Tommy made no reply, but, seizing a rock, he hurled it at his tormentor.

Jimmy nabbed it on the fly, and slung it back.

It hit Tommy in the place where his shirt bosom ends, and gave him watermelon cramp for the next half hour.

"Bull's-eye!" shouted Jimmy. "Put down another for the

'Merican rifle team. Come along, Bobby, and we'll leave those two orphans to lead each other in prayer."

Going into the kitchen, they met Mary Ann.

"Ah, Mary, me darling, you're lookin' sweeter nor a prize banana," said Jimmy, winking at her.

"Arrah, be aisy wid you," said Mary Ann, smiling.

"Couldn't," returned Jimmy. "You're so sweet that when folks see yer standing in the yard dey take yer for a rose bush."

"Be still wid ye."

"Then give us pie; I'm so hungry dat I could eat a brass baby."

Mary Ann bustled around, and got them the pie; and inside of ten minutes that pie looked like an exploded powder mill.

"Mary you're a whole brick yard," said Jimmy, finishing his pie crust, and preparing to vamoose. "I wish dat I had ears like yours."

"Why?" asked Mary, stopping in her sweeping, in expectation of another compliment.

"Becos' I'd put handles to them and use dem for snow shovels." And, before the enraged girl could reach for the stove lifter, Jimmy and Bob were out of sight.

But they reappeared again before long, and fell across Pomp, who was coming up the road with a tub.

"What are you going to do, Pomp?" asked Jimmy, who had made up with the good-natured darky since the parrot scrape. "Going to take a bath?"

"P'raps he's going to put it on his watch chain for a locket," suggested Bob.

"No, chillin', I isn't," said Pomp, solemnly.

"What, then?"

"Gwine ter hab it fo' de tub race."

"The tub race—what tub race?" ejaculated Bob and Jimmy.

Pomp gazed at them in surprise.

"Whar has youse been," he asked, "dat youse ain't heerd nuffin' 'bout dat tub race? Chillin', I se 'fraid youse are tryin' ter fool de ole man."

"Solemn Moses, we ain't," protested Jimmy.

"Really?"

"Yes, honest Injun. Tell us about it."

"Yer see," commenced Pomp, coming to anchor on his tub, "de gemmen at de big hotel down to de point hab made up dat a tub race shall be sailed by de Turnover boys fo' a prize."

"What prize?" asked Jimmy.

"You kan't guess, chile."

"House and lot?"

"No, sah."

"Patent bouncing machine?"

"Wrong ag'in; besides, dat am foolishness. Sumfin grand."

"Oh, I pass," said Jimmy, in disgust.

"So do I," chimed in Bob.

"Well," said Pomp, his face all one broad grin, "de prize am a bar'l of potatoes and a big codfish."

"Thunder!" cried Jimmy, "that's a gallus old prize. Why don't dem high-toners chuck in a quart of dried apples an' a box of baking soda? Dey're the kind of hairpins that wants to git up a hoss race with a postal card for the fust prize."

"Spects dey's so," murmured Pomp, philosophically, "but dis nigger don't care, fo' dere's to be lots ob fun. I is gwine to enter."

"You goin' ter sail in a tub?" cried Jimmy, in astonishment.

"Youse a workin' your whistle 'cordin' to de Scripiter, chile. My culled lady-love am death on codfish, an' I se gwine ter get dat one fo' her."

Jimmy mused a moment.

"Bob," said he, suddenly, "I'm goin' in, too."

"You going to take a cabin passage in a tub?"

"Bet yer liver! You'll see a gilded chariot a-waltzin' up here with that 'ere barrel of 'taters under the front seat, and the codfish a-flapping his tail out of the door."

"Will the deacon let you?" asked Bob.

"Sure," answered Jimmy. "I'm solid with the old man. I told him the other night that I wanted to be a fifty-thousand-dollar missionary, and go around telling the heathen ghost stories, and it tickled him 'most to death. Lets me do anything now."

"All right," replied Bob; "I hope you get the prize."

"I'm sure of it," declared Jimmy, confidently; "the fust feller that tries to get ahead of me in the race will suddenly git accidentally hit in the bugle. I've set my heart on dat codfish."

"Here comes the deacon," interrupted Bob.

"Sure enough," Jimmy remarked, "dat's the blessed old church pillar! Wait till I brace him."

Up the walk came the deacon, from the village postoffice, where he had been settling the affairs of the nation with a lot of the other old fogies, and he called to Jimmy:

"Jimmy, my son," he said, "come here."

"I'm skipping, sir," returned Jimmy, reaching his side.

"I've got a present for you—a real nice book," said the deacon, going a-fishing in his coat-tails.

"What is it? Buffer Bill, the bloody snoot-buster of the Bowery? or Frog-eyed Farley, the Irish Highwayman?" asked Jimmy, with enthusiasm.

"Neither. No such low, perverting trash," and the deacon handed a soberly-bound little volume to his hopeful son.

Jimmy looked at it.

"Charles Howard, the Boy Missionary, who died at the age of eleven, admired by all who knew him," murmured he, reading the title. "Well, dat's a sick old book. All about a good little galoot that washed his ears, never told lies, an' went ter church seven times a Sunday, an' den wept cos he couldn't go no more."

But Jimmy did not say this aloud.

Not much.

Instead, he looked up at the deacon like half a dozen Sunday-school boys, and said:

"This is the kind uv reading that I take stock in. Can't I go to the moral tub race to-morrow?"

"What tub race?"

Then Jimmy had to go to work and explain, and after a good deal of coaxing the good old man finally gave his consent.

He got his reward, too.

"You're a tip-top old Charlie!" cried Jimmy, "an' I bet when you get to heaven dey'll give you the fust show at the harp an' stick you in the front row of angels."

"Hush!" ordered the deacon, in horror, proceeding to give Jimmy a double-barreled lecture, which made about as much impression on the little rogue as a pound of sawdust would on a rock.

The rest of the evening Jimmy spent in selecting his tub, which he fixed up finely with red and blue paint and a couple of American flags stuck in the handles.

"Bust me if folks won't take it for a floatin' circus, and want ter know where dey pay to go in!" observed he, as he took a last look at his yacht before going in to bed.

Next morning he was up bright and early.

Most of the forenoon was spent preparing for the contest and after dinner Jimmy and Pomp, in company with their tubs, drove down to the river where the race was to take place.

The contestants were to start from the only wharf that Turnover boasted, and when Jimmy reached there the wharf itself and the surrounding shore were covered with people, for it takes very little to raise a crowd in a small country village.

Jimmy was received with cheers when he arrived, for the memory of his trial was yet fresh in the minds of the town folks.

"Going to go in the race, Jimmy?" asked an honest farmer.

"Sure as your chirping," returned Jimmy, shouldering his tub, "an' the fellers dat try to get ahead of me want to get their heads blocked afore they start, for they might as well try to scoop in the stars to play checkers with."

The farmer grinned, and Jimmy and Pomp continued on their way to the end of the wharf.

Half a dozen country lads were already there, sitting around in their bathing tights, and waiting for the signal to start.

"Here comes the deacon's son," called out somebody; "see that muscle."

"Most as big as a peanut," added another joker.

"Who's that he's got behind him?"

"The devil!"

"No, it ain't; it's Fred Douglas. Watch those ferry boats mash the gravel."

"Dat'll do," spoke up Pomp, angry at the rather personal remarks; "jest you chillun stop wasting your breff in dat manner, an' tend to bizness, like me," and Pomp stooped down and deposited his tub, an architectural triumph which looked as if it had been struck by a masked battery, and then smoothed down by a drove of wild horses.

"Look at the ark!" cried one of the boys.

"Pike the hen-coop!" called another.

"See him wrestle with the cheese box!" sung out a third.

"Jest youse shut up, or I'll mash youse in de mouf!" growled Pomp, goaded by the laughter of those around him; and there might have been a spirited little row, for the boys felt mischievous, and would have made some impudent reply if Deacon Grimes had not put in an appearance.

He looked with dismay at the row of tubs which arose and fell and bobbed around with the tide.

"James," said he, "they're not safe."

"Safe as a canal boat," was Jimmy's quick reply; "you might put a pair of twins and a billy goat in one and they wouldn't get upset."

"I don't think so. You better stay out, James."

"No, sir. Why, a feller could use his shirt for a sail an' go to Europe in one of those tubs. Just you get in and see."

Gingerly the deacon complied, and stepped into one of the slippery, sliding tubs.

If he had been a yellow-legged canary bird he could not have stepped in more gently.

But somehow, just as he got in the center of the tub the rope which held it to the wharf broke, and down the stream, whirling like a top in the current, it went.

"Oh, Lord!" shrieked the deacon, as he vainly attempted to keep his balance. "I'm afloat! Help—help!"

"Fo' Moses!" shrieked Pomp, half in laughter, half in fright, "de ole man's got de codfish, shuah!"

"Brace up and keep in the middle of the mud scow or you're a goner," Jimmy yelled, feeling as happy as a fiddle at the ludicrous accident.

But the deacon didn't appreciate the joke worth a cent.

He had to waltz around in that tub like a maniac to keep from going over.

"Great ham-bones!" muttered he, "ain't this a pretty fix? Me, the oldest church member in Turnover, going down the river in a tub! What will folks say?"

This was what folks did say:

"He's drunk!"

"Ain't it shameful? And he a church member, too!"

"The old hypocritical rooster!"

"See him stagger?"

"Out on a regular spree, and stole some little boy's tub, I'll bet you!"

"Oh, the vile deceiver, setting himself up for a saint!"

But the deacon didn't hear them, and he wouldn't have cared an individual darn if he had. That tub was gyrating around as if

suddenly attacked by blind staggers, and the good old man, bent nearly double, was howling like a fiend for help, as he grasped the slippery sides.

"Jerusalem!" he gasped, as a sudden lurch sent a couple of gallons of water into his boots. "This is awful! Why don't somebody help me? Great ham-bones, I'm a goner!"

Meanwhile the boys were having lots of fun with him, shouting and calling at him, and the deacon got mad.

"Oh, you sinners!" bawled he, forgetting himself, and standing straight upright, "I hope that you'll all be——"

"Blessed," he was probably going to say, but he did not have time to say it.

That tub tra-la-looed bottom side upward, and with a smothered yell the deacon went to look for Jonah's whale.

Evidently he couldn't find him, for he came to the surface again in a hurry, just in time to be caught by Jimmy, who, together with Pomp, had got a boat and pulled out.

Wet, cold, shivering, and mad enough to furnish material for a dozen cemeteries, the deacon got pulled into the boat and laid on a sheet to dry.

"James," stuttered he, spitting the salt water from his mouth, "b-b-blast the b-blasted tub! Oh, I'm a wicked, wicked man."

And Jimmy, winking at Pomp, smole a gentle smile, which Pomp returned with interest.

CHAPTER IV.

The deacon had got all he wanted, and several cents over, of tub racing, and he positively forbid Jimmy's taking part in the affair, consequently our little hero was reluctantly compelled to get into his everyday rig and again watch the other boys go in for the barrel of potatoes and the codfish, which, strange to say, was won by Pomp.

His success made him the most tickled ducky that ever shouted out loud.

"Praise de Lord!" said he, running up to Jimmy with his trophies; "look at dem, chile—freeze your eyes on dem. Ain't dey gorjuss?"

"Very," grinned Jimmy; "nuff ter make the fellers dat didn't get dem carve demselves up into cornbeef hash. What are you going to do with them—give a surprise party, or start a wholesale grocery shebang?"

"Neether. Gwine ter gib dem to my gal. Dey'll make her kick dat red petticoat ob hers inter tatters wid joy."

"Hope not," responded Jimmy; and then, as the sun was about hiring lodgings for the night, Bobby and the deacon and he started for home.

"Want to go on a jim-jam to-morrow?" whispered Bob in his ear.

"Where?"

"Camp-meeting."

"What?"

"You bet! We'll have the greatest old hurrah ever was."

"How'll we go—walk?"

"Thunder, no! I'm going to borrow dad's old horse and the box-wagon, and we'll go in style."

"Fish-nets on the hoss' ears and blue ribbon with 'God bless our home' tacked to his tail?"

"Sure; we'll give the folks high-toned taffy."

"What are you boys talking about?" queried the deacon, as he limped along in his wet clothes, acting as a sort of watering cart.

"Going to a camp-meeting, sir," replied Jimmy, with all the brass in the world. "Bob says he wants to be converted into a hymn-book tarrier."

"Your language is positively horrible," groaned the deacon; "but I hope Robert is in earnest in his good intention."

"He is," assured Jimmy; "say's he's going ter chuck his marbles into the canal, and start a one-hoss prayin' band with a bally de kore of fifty young and beautiful young ladies in pink tights."

"No more of such talk, or I shall punish you," and the deacon frowned, partly at Jimmy and partly at the quart of water, which caused the stern of his pantaloon to bulge out like a balloon.

"Fondle me with a flagpole, hey?" inquired Jimmy.

"With a good piece of birch," thundered the deacon. "Solomon says——"

"Thumbs up," grinned Jimmy.

"Verily, he is incorrigible," murmured his left-handed parent; "but I trust in time that he will find the true way."

"Was you hunting for it when you skipped off in the tub?" queried Jimmy soberly.

Bob couldn't help snickering out loud, and the deacon yanked Jimmy by the ear.

"Young man," said he, "there is a limit to my endurance. Take care."

Jimmy accepted the warning, and kept the awning over his mouth the rest of the way home.

"The old man," whispered he to Bob, as they parted for the night, "don't get on his ear often; but when he does, he's a bald-headed terror, and don't you forget it."

Bob promised that he wouldn't, and then started for home, whistling to keep the ghosts away.

Next morning, bright and early, he appeared before the deacon's gate with his turn-out.

It was a turnout, and didn't need any sign to tell it, for most folks would have immediately turned out and died on beholding it.

In the first place the horse had a general appearance of having

dined for months on barrel staves and hoop skirts, and in the second place he was principally all head.

Besides, he was blind in one eye and couldn't see out of the other, had the toothache in all four feet, and was the sort of an animal that would like to stay in one spot and get photographed.

But for all that the old horse could go, for he was once a celebrated trotter, but, becoming sprung, he had been purchased by Bob's father for a mere song, and worn down by hard work until he resembled an equine skeleton as much as anything else.

The wagon, too, was a beauty; an old ram-shackle affair that looked as if it had played freight car in a railroad riot.

But, in spite of all, Jimmy thought the turn-out was simply immense.

"It's gallus," pronounced he, climbing into the wagon. "Now if we only had a brass band all the folks would take us for a circus, and skip out to see the white whale chew bananas."

Bob laughed, and gathered up the reins.

Just then a familiar voice called out:

"Hold on there!"

Jimmy and Bob turned, just as the deacon appeared alongside of the wagon.

"Boys," said he, "I have determined that it would not be correct for you two to go alone to the camp-meeting. You are young and inexperienced, and the world is full of wickedness. Therefore I have resolved to accompany you."

The boys stared at each other in consternation, and Jimmy slowly whistled, "I want to be an angel."

"Our fun's spoiled," groaned Bob. "Blamed if I wouldn't have come in a hay-rigging and a yoke of oxen, if I knew that the old buffer was coming along."

"Never mind," whispered Jimmy; "we'll have a torch-light procession with his ancient nibs. Jump in, dad, and hire a furnished room on the back seat."

The deacon complied, and the wagon started off, its inhabitants looking for all the world as if they had a corpse in the bottom.

They reached the camp ground all right, tied their barouche to a whitewashed tree, and the deacon, going off with some church friend, the boys were left to themselves.

After indulging in some stomach-shaking lemonade and cast-iron peanuts, they took a stroll through the camp grounds.

Jimmy was such an innocent youth that a long-haired saint in a big coat and a bigger collar, soon spotted him.

"My dear young friend," groaned he, "come with me."

"Where to," queried Jimmy, "grub-mill or dancing platform? Goin' ter give me a knock down to some daisy?"

The long-haired saint groaned again until it was a wonder that his liver didn't give way.

"Oh, no," said he; "follow me—I will lead you to the light."

"Gas light or kerosene lamp?" dryly inquired Jimmy, following the saint.

That personage didn't answer, but led his youthful followers to a retired tent, wherein were seated three other saints, who were holding communion with a greasy pack of cards.

Jimmy looked surprised, and poked his guide playfully in the ribs.

"That's your little racket," said he; "quiet game on the sly; you're the capper, hey? Dem's nice looking fellers dat are heeling for you. Where did you get them—out of the museum?"

"Verily, no," replied the saint; "we are doing it for the good of a fallen race. Young man, will you examine the sinful cards?"

"With the greatest of pleasure," replied Jimmy; "hand over the keards."

One of the men complied, and Jimmy shuffled them.

"My young friend," wheezed the first saint, "the treasury of the Lord is low; we want to raise a fund to convert the savages of the Barcelona Isle—in short, my dear boy, I'll bet you whatever you wish that I can cut the Jack of clubs the first time."

There was a queer look in Jimmy's blue eyes as he fooled with the cards for a moment, and then handed them back.

"I ain't rich," said he, "an' it's low tide in my pocketbook, but still I don't mind going a dollar that you can't cut the Jack, old man."

The saint screwed his eyes together, pulled out a big pocket knife, and deliberately cut the pack in two.

"There, my innocent babe," whined he, "I've cut the Jack of clubs the first time," and he reached over his paw to scoop in Jimmy's dollar.

"Nixey," shouted Jimmy; "dat 'ere dollar won't convert ther savages worth a cent. It's your fork-over, old ringlets. Here's his royal nibbs, solid as a stone fence," and Jimmy triumphantly held up the Jack of clubs, which he had secreted up his sleeve while handling the cards.

If there ever were three men that wanted to go and butt their heads against a hydrant they were the long-haired saint and his friends. They had imagined that they had a soft thing—a regular plum pudding with lots of raisins, and here they had been fooled by a little chap not much bigger than a grasshopper.

Jimmy tumbled to their confusion, and smiled all over.

"The next time that you chaps pick up a city cove like me fer a flat, send me word by express," said he, scooting out of the tent. "Bettter clear out, or I'll tell the constable, an' you'll be prancing around in State prison with a Dolly Varden suit on."

"What does it all mean?" asked Bob, after the boys had got some distance from the tent.

"Mean?" repeated Jimmy. "Oh, it's an old dodge. These sharpers go around taking in fairs and camp-meetings, an' skin the greenies on that card dodge. But dey picked up the wrong apple blossom when they tackled me. Jimmy Grimes, he ain't no

shad, and he don't need blinders. Chalk that down in red ink, and don't you forget it."

Thus chuckling to himself, Jimmy towed Bob around, and showed him the elephant. At least, as much of the quadruped as was visible at the camp-meeting.

Suddenly they turned a corner; they heard a queer sort of noise.

"Coffee-mill," suggested Bob.

"Tain't; it's some cow trying to warble 'The Sweet By and By' with an apple in her throat," said Jimmy, stopping to listen.

Sure enough, borne on the breeze, came the hoarse words:

"There's a land (hic) that's fairer than day,
An' (hic) by faith weshallsee it afar——"

"Feller that's singing has got 'em bad," observed Bob.

"Orful; taken his hat for a tunnel, and is trying to crawl through it, most likely."

"Who do you suppose it is?"

"Give it up; but it seems to me the voice is familiar."

"That's the way it strikes me. Let's explore."

"I'm your sardine. Go ahead."

Bob obeyed, and walked in the direction of the melodious voice. It grew nearer and nearer, and finally, as they emerged from a clump of trees, they saw—the deacon.

Yes, it was the deacon, and a sweet-looking old deacon he was.

His nose was red, his hat was cocked jauntily over one eye, and he was howling the "Sweet By and By" at the top of his voice, stopping occasionally to swear at his cane, which obstinately refused to get up and come to him.

"Full as a goat."

"Boiling over."

Such were the boys' comments.

The deacon regarded them with fishy eyes, and softly remarked: "What'll you have, gemmen?"

"Nothing," replied Jimmy, tickled to death at the old rooster's state.

"Won't have nuthin', hey?" stuttered the deacon; "wanter fight, perhaps? Kin lick any man in the crowd for fivepence. Lick any woman, either."

"Ain't he a nice old man for a church fair?" observed Jimmy, surveying him.

"Bully," said Bob; "and to think that he bosses our temperance society."

"Well, dey all do it," Jimmy remarked, philosophically.

"Zat's so," murmured the good man gone wrong, catching the phrase, "zey all do it, an' whoever says they don't is a liar. Show him to me, gemmen, till I putsh a tin ear on him. Wheresh the barkeeper? He's a brick. Fill 'em up again. My name is Deacon Josiah Grimes, an' I'm out on a biling old tare. Put some whisky in mine, an' darn the expense."

"Nice example for his Sunday-school son," said Jimmy.

"Tip-top 'awful example,'" said Bob, laughing; "he's baked, he is. Don't know us from Adam."

"Never say damn," chorused the deacon; "the man that shays damn is a (hic) damn son of a gun. Lemme git up, an' I'll show him so——" and the deacon attempted to rise, but only succeeded in rolling gracefully over on his back, where he remained, feebly wagging his feet in the air.

"We can't leave the old cod here like a babe in the woods," said Bob. "Somebody might kidnap him for a scarecrow."

"Ke-rect," responded Jimmy; "we'll have to rush him into the wagon and start home with him."

Advancing to his prostrate sire, Jimmy shook him by the shoulder, exclaiming:

"Chance cars, old man!"

"Got a through ticket," muttered the deacon; "lemme 'lone."

Jimmy tried to lift him, but he was very heavy, and Jimmy called to Bob:

"Come here, Bob, and help raise him."

Together they got the deacon on his feet—and fearfully unsteady feet they were, too—and marched him in the direction of the wagon, the venerable sinner all the while begging them to step up and take a little something with him like "little men."

By good luck they got him to the wagon without being observed. The walk seemed to have sobered him, for all of a sudden he recognized the boys.

"Zat you, James?" asked he. "Ain't you sorry for your poor father? Your poor father (hic) gotsh ze colic bad. Too mush watermelon."

"Too much bad whisky," grinned Bob.

"Whatsh zat you shay?" inquired the deacon. "Never tasted whisky in my life—it (hic) stingeth like a—like a——"

"Mosquito," suggested Jimmy.

"Sanks. Li' a mosquito. Follow your parent's advice, James, an' neveresh drink. Bad thing to do."

"We see so," replied Jimmy; "but come, dad, hop in the wagon—we're going to put for home."

"Don't wanter go; wanter nuther drink, for we're all jolly good fellers—an' we're all jolly good fellers—an'—an' letsh pray."

"Oh, come along, you're giving yourself away awful," Jimmy urged. "Here, Bob, let's hist him in the chariot," and together the two lads succeeded in tumbling the church pillar on the front seat.

"Better tie him to the dash-board," said Bob, "or he'll be taking a grand bounce off."

"Oh, he's all right; he's gradually sobering off; got just about enough in him to feel as jolly as an old ram."

The deacon was gradually sobering off, but still he was rather cocked.

"James," said he, as the wagon rolled out on the broad turnpike, "gimme ze reins."

"What do you want of the reins?" returned James.

"Wanter drive."

"Better humor him," urged Bob.

So Jimmy handed the ribbons over, and the deacon grabbed them with unsteady hands.

"G'lang!" shouted he, hitting the horse a welt with the whip that made him try his best to turn a somersault and convert the wagon into toothpicks.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Bob, hanging on to the back seat with a comic expression of terror on his apple pie face. "Get those reins back—he'll upset us!"

"We'll tumble if he does," punned Jimmy; but at that moment his attention was attracted in another direction.

A stylish road wagon, drawn by a horse whose sleek appearance and thin legs indicated considerable speed, had driven up beside them.

Said road wagon contained two well-dressed chaps—city clerks out for a holiday, most likely—and these chaps had a delusive idea that they were immensely big and immensely funny.

"Tom," said the one who was driving, pointing to the deacon's horse, "that's a nice animal, ain't it?"

"Tip-top."

"Make a good clothes horse."

"Or a hen-coop."

"Wonder what they feed him on—railroad iron?"

"No, ten-penny nails and fence pickets."

"Look at that head—looks like a soap-bucket."

"And his hoofs—big enough for meat blocks."

"Stylish old chap that is driving."

"Very. Guess he's pretty full, though."

"Wonder where they stole the wagon?"

"Tain't a wagon."

"What is it, a hearse?"

"No; it's Noah's ark on wheels. Don't breathe hard, Jim."

"Why not?"

"Might blow the old nag over, and make a shipwreck." And they both laughed heartily.

"Very fresh," said Bob to Jimmy.

"Very. Must eat their grub without salt," replied Jimmy.

"Listen, the old man's going to take a hand."

Yes, the deacon had chipped in.

"Wasser matter you two gemmen?" inquired he.

"Oh, nothing—only admiring that architectural ruin of yours."

"What arktectooral ruin—wasser say?" inquired the deacon.

"That animated bone-rack—that spirited trotter. Why the deuce don't you get him a truss?" replied the fellow designated as Tom.

"That hoss is all right."

"I know it—right there, and nowhere else. But come, old Elijah, get out of the way."

"What for?"

"We want to pass you."

"Why don't yer?"

"Darn the old mule," said Tom, impatiently, "he's driving so you couldn't steer a bedbug between him and either side of the road."

"Let me get at him," answered Jim; and raising his voice, he exclaimed:

"Hey, there, you bald-headed coot, just waltz that umbrella frame and the monkeys' cage to one side!"

"Hey?" murmured the deacon, still driving all over the road, caroming against the fence on one side and then repeating the feat on the opposite side.

"Turn out the four-in-hand and let us slide by."

"Hey?"

"Blame the old sucker, he seems to have been struck deaf all of a sudden. You give him a blast, Tom."

So Tom opened his mouth until it looked like a cellar entrance, and howled:

"I say—will—you—get—to—one side—with—that—camel—and the—pony phaeton—and—let—us—by?"

"Wanter pass me, hey?" asked the deacon, tipping his hat over one eye and gathering up the reins. "James, ye hold that whip, and when I say so let her have it."

"Yes," shouted the city chap, "that's what we want. Turn out or we'll take a wheel off."

"All right," said the deacon, pulling up, "go ahead."

By they went in fine style.

"Tra-la!" yelled Tom. "Shall I tell them at the next village that you'll be along by Christmas if you don't starve to death on the way?"

"Needn't mind," responded the deacon; and as they had just arrived at a spot where the road widened, he sung out:

"Give it to her, James."

"You bet," said Jimmy, letting the old nag have it across the back, "an' remember that it ain't a canary bird that's hitting you."

Bob's Arab steed must have thought so, too, for he gave a leap that nearly caused Jimmy to feel around in the bottom of the wagon for his head, and shot forward like an arrow.

In a minute they were up to the fancy turn-out.

"Great Heavens, Tom!" cried one of the city chaps, "that bony ruin has gone crazy. Look at him raise the dust."

"I'll be hanged if he passes us," answered Tom, licking up.

For a while it was nip and tuck, both sides shouting like fiends.

"Who galvanized your trotter?"

"Nobody. Why don't you put wheels on that mule of yours?"

"Better put a rope around his neck and hitch him on behind our wagon."

"Couldn't; he'd run over you. Whoop! I guess we are!" and

as Jimmy triumphantly yelled the last the deacon shot by his opponents like an express train.

In vain they tried to catch up. Bob's nag had his blood up, and he forged ahead like lightning.

"Say," screamed Jimmy, leaning over the back seat, "don't you two want a cracker? You'll have to get out and put a chalk mark on the fence to see whether you are going or not. Shoot that horse!"

"Shut up!" growled one.

"Sold, by gracious!" mumbled the other, as he checked his horse down to a walk.

It wasn't long before Jimmy and company reached home, and with the assistance of Pomp the deacon's little shoes were put away, and they tucked him in his little bed.

"What a bully old head he will have on him in the morning," grinned Jimmy, as he undressed for the night. "Guess he won't want ter spell whisky for a year."

CHAPTER V.

The deacon did not get up the next morning.

So Jimmy found, when he went down to breakfast fresh as a lark.

"Where's the old man?" asked he, as Mary Ann waltzed some pan-cakes on to the table.

"Sick, sur."

"What ails him?"

"He tould me not to come in whin I knocked at his door this morning—said as how he was afther having the indiajestion."

"That's one name for the disease," laughed Jimmy. "Now, Mary Ann, telegraph that molasses over here, an' then you can go back to wrestlin' with soap suds."

Mary Ann did as required, but lingered around the door in a mysterious manner.

"What's the matter?" Jimmy inquired. "Feet stuck to the floor? Or do yer think of changing inter a salt pillar like Missus Lot?"

"Nather, sur," replied Mary Ann; "but may I ax yees a question, Master Jimmy?"

"Two for ten cents," said Jimmy, the tears in his eyes from a vain attempt to swallow four pancakes at once.

"Well, then, begging yees pardon, shure I hear that the deacon was dhrunk last night."

"Drunk?"

"Yis, sur: Mike McCarty said that he wur filled spillin' over, an' couldn't tell a praste from a turkey cock."

"Mike McCarty's a liar, and tell him dat if he don't stop telling love stories, I'll make dat ugly red head of his look like a busted firecracker. The deacon had the stomach ache—too much lobster salad an' fried bananas," explained Jimmy.

"Shure I thought Mike wur a-lying," muttered Mary Ann, sliding out. "The next time he comes around here blackguarding his betters, I'll bate in his ear with a broom-stick, so I will!"

"That settles that," observed Jimmy, in confidence to the syrup pot. "It wouldn't be the square thing to give the deac' away to folks. I ain't black, I ain't. A square deal every time, says Jimmy Grimes."

He had hardly finished this lucid remark before Pomp came into the room.

"Ah, me royal tar-brush, what struck you?" cheerfully asked Jimmy.

"De old man wants you," said Pomp.

"How do you know?"

"Stuck his head out ob de windy, an' said so. What a head he hab got on him—big's a barn! Look fo' all de debbil as if he'd jest recubbered from seein' snakes."

And Pomp showed a set of teeth that looked like tombstones.

"That'll do. The boss ain't got over the faintin' spell he had last night."

"What faintin' spell, sah?"

"He saw one of your old boots in the yard, and he thought that somebody had chucked the hen-roost up against the side of the house."

And Jimmy vanished stairward, while Pomp exclaimed:

"Swan to glory, but dat boy's a rip-snorter! Wonder where he's gwine to fetch up?"

As for James, he ascended the stairs two at a time and knocked at the deacon's door.

"Come in," said a feeble voice.

Jimmy entered, and the moment he did so he felt like hiding his head behind a chair, and laughing till he burst open.

For the deacon was such a comical sight! Such a looking old ruin of a church member!

He was lying in bed, with a head on him the size of a beer keg, his eyes all bulged out, and his whole appearance that of a man who had been slung around and fired downstairs, and used to wipe up floors with.

"Jimmy," muttered the deacon, burying his face in the pillow, "was I very drunk last night?"

This simple question opened a ten-acre lot of fun to Jimmy, and he immediately embraced it.

"Horrible!" said Jimmy, sober as a stone angel on a gravestone.

The deacon groaned.

"Why did I yield to temptation?" murmured he. "But yet that apple jack was good. Jimmy, what did I do? I forget everything."

"Bully for you," thought James. "I'll mighty soon remind you. Here goes the taffy." Then aloud he said:

"You raised h——"

"James," and the deacon spoke in his sternest tones, "never swear. Tell me something I did."

"Don't you remember knocking down the good old duffer that carried the collection plate, an' telling him that if he didn't stand treat, you'd spit in his eye?"

"Great Heavens—no!" the deacon moaned. "Did I really do that?"

"Yes, sir; and when he refused, you knocked him over and jumped on him."

"Oh, Lord!"

"And then you went up on the platform, an' interrupted the presiding elder, right in the middle of a six-story prayer, by asking him where the baby was that he had shoved into the foundling asylum."

"I'm a ruined man. Anything else?"

"Lots, sir. Then, coming home, you would drive, and you drove right through a nigger family, and paved that road with black meat for about a mile. Oh, you was on a regular git-out-of-the-way-or-I'll-bust-your-crust sort of a tare."

"I suppose so," said the deacon. "Oh, James, beware of the intoxicating bowl. I feel like committing suicide, when I think of my disgraceful conduct."

"Yes, you did act sorter bad," answered Jimmy, with an air of calm reflection. "Twasn't exactly right to tell the minister that he was a red-headed, sore-legged fool, and that you'd walk all over him if he didn't get out of the way, and sit on the fence till you marched by."

"What an exhibition I must have made of myself!"

"You bet; most fellows thought it was the circus. But the worst thing you did was to maul Squire Bilberry."

"Maul him?"

"Yes—break him all up—knock the thunder out of him."

"I did?"

"If you'd seen them waltzing him home on a cellar door, you'd a thought so."

"How did it happen?"

"He was a little tight, too, and said he saw a starlight procession going through the air. You told him his mother was a liar, and you went for him."

"Did I hurt him?"

"Just a little, that's all. Why, he looked as if he had tried to throw a lightning express off the track by squatting down in front of it, and then attempted to carve his monogram on a mule's hind heels. Oh, he was a mussed up, chucked-around-in-pieces looking sparrer, he was."

"I must have been wild, crazy, raving. Oh, James, James, my son, never—never drink whisky; and particularly bad whisky. Why, the stuff I drank must have had gunpowder in it."

"Never tend to drink," answered Jimmy. "I'm a milk-and-water boy. Gwin fer cashier of a temp'rance bank, and then scoots fer Europe with the ducats. That's the kind of a S. O. T. I am."

"Try to treat the thing seriously," whined the deacon. "Oh, that head of mine."

"Feels as if there was a saw-mill inside of it, with a boiler manufactory next door," suggested Jimmy.

"Yes."

"Well, you was pretty well salted. Any old rooster that squints his eye up at the moon, and wants to know why the deuce they don't put out the garret lamp, ain't 'sponsible for what he says."

"I know it, James, I know it; but my assault on Squire Bilberry bothers me. I guess I will apologize," said the deacon, feeling like kicking himself all over, when he thought of his folly of the previous evening.

Jimmy jumped at the suggestion eagerly.

He saw another chance for a diminutive hurrah.

"You better," said he: "fer the squire's a bad man, an' he might come around here, and play hurricane with things."

"I will," came the deacon's reply. "Call Pomp."

So Jimmy stuck his bullet head out of the window and bawled to Pomp, who was digging worms to go fishing with:

"Come up heah, ye bloody nagur!"

"Who's dat?" cried Pomp, dropping his spade and looking around.

"Who say dat? Who call me a bloody nagur?"

"Drop on yurself, ye big-footed moke."

"It's big-footed I am, hey?" Pomp yelled, not yet catching sight of Jimmy. "Fo' Moses, if I eber ketch de flannel-mouthed Mick dat's—"

By this time Pomp was thoroughly convinced that there was some unseen Irishman defaming him, and he felt that if he ever caught said Irishman, he would make him resemble the ground plan of the Chicago fire.

Jimmy enjoyed his rage hugely, and was about to sing further complimentary words, when he suddenly found himself seized by the neck and railroaded into the room.

It was the deacon who had acted as a patent bouncer, and the deacon seemed disposed to repeat the operation.

"James," said he, "if you can't do anything without transforming yourself into an idiot, don't you do it."

Jimmy felt a little abashed, and so leaned far out of the window, where Pomp would be sure to see him, and called:

"Pomp, come up here."

"Jess wait till I find dat low white trash dat's makin' hisself too cussed familliah wid dis culled man," replied Pomp, hunting around the bushes and peering up at the weather-cock, as if more than half suspecting that his imaginary foe was hid in that wooden rooster's tail.

"Let him slide, an' climb the golden stair up here quicker nor sheet lightning, or the deacon will fairly kill yer. He is fooling around with his shotgun already."

Appalled at this vivid description of his master's rage, Pomp came upstairs as if a raging lion was playing tag with him.

"I see here, dickum," said he, coming into the room out of breath.

"Why didn't you take all day and part of next week," roared the deacon, flinging a boot at him.

Pomp mumbled something, and then stood on the defensive, as if he expected the bed would be hurled at him next.

"Tell Squire Bilberry that I want to see him right away," continued the deacon; "and if you don't get back in ten minutes, I'll pay you no wages Saturday night."

Pomp slid out of the apartment as if he had been wading through gunpowder with a lighted Roman candle in his hand, and muttered, as he reached the door:

"Lor, ain't de ole man in a huff 'Tain't safe to fool roun' him ter day. But I would like to ketch dat Irishman."

Meanwhile the deacon had crawled into bed again, exhausted with his temporary ebullition of passion, and was groaning away like an over-loaded horse car.

"Better take a little," urged Jimmy, mysteriously.

"Take a little what?"

"Soda water," with a wink.

"Perhaps a little brandy would do me good."

"Make yer as fresh an' bloomin' as a sunflower."

"But I ain't got any."

Jimmy winked slyly, and, after a descent into his pistol pocket, produced a small black bottle.

"Benzine," whispered he; "kill a cast-iron man ten thousand miles away."

"Where did you get it?" the deacon sternly queried.

"Found it in your wagon; guess an angel must have dropped it."

"Bosh! Hand me the bottle. I remember it; some joker must have put it in my pocket at the camp-meeting."

"Spect so," answered Jimmy, honest as a clam, although he knew all of the time that the old man was lying, and the bottle was his own property.

The deacon took the bottle, and also took a good swallow. It slid down his throat smoothly, and he repeated the operation.

"Ah," he murmured, "I feel better—a good deal better. After all, James, perhaps the squire deserved the chastisement that I visited upon him."

"Guess yer head's level dere," replied Jimmy.

"And I don't believe that I'll humble myself so very much," went on the deacon, his Dutch courage rising.

Jimmy encouraged him in the resolve, and chuckled to himself.

"If there don't be another battle on the Danube around here in about five minutes you can use me to cork soda water bottles with," he softly whispered.

In less than the time specified Pomp made his appearance.

"Squire's downstairs," said he.

"Show him up," ordered the deacon, while Jimmy warbled in his ear:

"Brace up, dad, and don't knuckle down too much to the dicky-bird."

"I won't," assured the deacon. "Ah, here he is."

Sure enough, the door slowly opened.

In slid the squire.

The squire looked more like an apple dumpling stuck on tooth-picks than anything else, for he was as fat as a bullfrog, had a head with a race course on top of it, and two little legs that seemed to be in momentary danger of giving way.

Besides, his nose was the color of a red, red rose, and for spectacles he wore a pair of antique gig-lamps.

In fact, he was not a masher by any means.

He came in the room with an expression of astonishment, and immediately proceeded to hold a chair down.

"Did you send for me, deacon?" asked he, gazing at the disordered appearance of things, for on coming in on the night previous the exhilarated deacon had hung most of his clothes on the floor.

"Y—yes," stuttered the deacon, not quite knowing how to break the ice.

"Well, I'm here," said the squire, continuing to take stock in things. "Do you generally put your boots on the bed-post, deacon, and chuck your coat under the bed?"

"No," shortly replied Deacon Grimes. "Squire Bilberry, I want to apologize," and the good old man stared hard at his visitor, who, strange to say, didn't exhibit any particular marks of having been knocked down and rolled around in the gay and lively manner depicted by Jimmy.

"Apologize for what?" asked the squire, imagining that the deacon had gone stark mad.

"For what I did to you last night."

"What?"

"You know that I was—was—well, I wasn't myself at the time, and—"

"Good Lord, deacon, are you clean crazy?"

"What do you mean, sir?" shouted the deacon, "by such a question? Perhaps I was a little crazy last night, but this morning I am perfectly sane. Oh, squire, if you only knew how I repent my action."

"What in the devil does the man mean?" murmured the squire, all in a fog.

"He's tryin' fer ter get yer on a hay rope," whispered Jimmy to his dad.

"Trying to do what?"

"Fill yer full—give yer taffy."

"What's that?"

"Play innocent; pretend that you didn't hit him. You see, he don't want it known that he was over the bay, too."

The deacon had taken just enough that morning to feel obstinate,

and the idea that the squire was trying to fool him, so artfully suggested by Jimmy, riled him.

"Squire," said the deacon, with what he meant for a wink, "you are a little too old to play lamb."

"Play lamb!" echoed the astonished squire. "Why, the man's positively insane."

"Too thin," chuckled the deacon; "it was a rather discreditable row we had, but we couldn't help it. How are your wounds?"

The squire stared in open-mouthed bewilderment, as if he more than half expected one of the chairs would walk up next thing and inquire if he had a putty head.

"I ain't wounded," gasped he.

"Well, I expected it wasn't as bad as Jimmy made out," said the deacon, "but I did use you rather rough."

"When—where—how? What the devil do you mean?" stammered the squire, wondering whether it would not be necessary to protect himself with firearms, and regretting that he did not have a small pack of artillery concealed about his person.

"Don't play Johnny Green on me," ordered the deacon; "you know that we were both pretty so-so last evening."

"What?"

"Corned—baked—blind as bats—tipsy," struck in Jimmy, happy as an oyster in August.

"Me drunk—last night?" said the thunderstruck squire.

"Of course," and the deacon began to get mad. "Don't you remember me punching your head?"

"No, sir, I don't! I wasn't drunk last night; you didn't punch my head, and whoever says so is a liar!" blustered the squire. "Darned if I'd a come here if I knew that you'd gone crazy."

"I'm crazy and a liar, too, hey?" remarked the deacon, climbing out of bed.

"If you say that I was drunk last night you are," repeated the squire, backing out toward the door and mentally wishing that he had insured his life before coming to the deacon's.

This was enough for Deacon Grimes. The old cock's temper was fairly roused, and he was just mad enough to be as unreasoning as an old ram.

Seizing a pillow, he let it fly.

It went across the room like a bullet, and tallied a bull's-eye on the squire's stomach.

"First blood for the old man," chirped Jimmy, getting out of the way.

The pillow made the squire reel around like a gimp-legged turkey, but it did not entirely knock him off of his pins.

As soon as he had got the tears out of his eyes he froze on to the first thing he could find and let the deacon have it.

The first thing was a water pitcher, and it fetched the deacon on the forehead.

The deacon immediately sat down. He felt weak, and he needed rest.

But when he got up again he had a lump like a small hill above his eye, and he was determined to massacre the squire.

With a bound like a wild Indian he went for him.

"You low, disreputable sinner," yelled he, "smell that!" and his fist shot out like a catapult.

Down went the squire under the table, the deacon bracing up to him, ready to let him have it again if he tried to rise.

"Oh, Lord!" screeched the squire, clapping his hand over his smitten nose, which the deacon's fist had completely demoralized.

"Help. For God's sake control him, James; he'll murder me!"

"James, if you attempt to interfere, I'll lick you so that you'll be weak for a month," the deacon observed, prancing around in his night-shirt, and aiming blows at his downfallen opponent. "I'm a liar, am I? Oh, yes, of course! Jest get up, please, till I knock you down, you fat, big, overgrown Philistine!"

"Oh, Lord!" wailed Squire Bilberry, wishing he could hide under the carpet, or float out of the window without being seen. "I—I beg your pardon, deacon."

"You was drunk, then?" argued the other.

"Yes—yes; dead drunk; tight as a tick; uproarious!" affirmed the squire, fully convinced that Turnover's deacon was crazy, and thinking that he had better humor him in his hallucination.

"Glad to see that you have come to your senses at last," grimly remarked the deacon. "I did chastise you last evening, didn't I?"

"Oh, yes; battered me to bits," groaned the squire, arising with extreme caution. "James, for Heaven's sake give me my hat!"

"Shall I give him his dicer?" asked Jimmy, playfully punching in the Horace Greeley cady that the squire sported.

"Yes."

Jimmy handed it over with a low bow.

"Bully hat," remarked he, "for a hen's nest."

But the squire only growled, and turned himself into a lightning express for the door.

"I shall send a doctor and a commissioner in lunacy immediately!" said he, flying out as quickly as his little legs could carry him.

"Do it," returned Jimmy. "Send a police station and a brigade of sogers, too. We'll give the hull lot the lightning bounce. Make 'em think dat dey've fell on top of the Bashi-galoots!"

"There," remarked the worthy deacon, turning into bed again, "I guess I've fixed him. But it is queer that he denied all knowledge of the spree at first."

"That 'ere chap," replied Jimmy, with contempt, "would lie the tail off a tin monkey."

Then the unblushing little rascal sat down on the window sill and whistled "I Want to be an Angel."

He did want to be an angel in reality in about an hour and a half.

The squire had never rested until he told all Turnover that Deacon Grimes had gone raving crazy.

In consequence a delegation headed by the minister, who had secretly stuck a butcher-knife in his left pantaloons-leg, to hold the deacon in check if he got dangerous, reached the Grimes mansion about noon.

At first the deacon, instigated by Jimmy, was in favor of covering his front stoop with the delegation's corpses; but milder reasoning prevailed, and after fifteen minutes' parleying the deacon concluded that he was the worst fooled man in all Turnover, and dismissing his friends, he held a strap matinee with Jimmy.

Perhaps it was not more than he deserved, but for over a week he took his meals on the mantelpiece, and sat down standing.

And he wisely concluded that he had better not fool with the deacon too far, as the result was apt to be more astonishing than pleasing.

CHAPTER VI.

For a week or two after his joke on his dad, Jimmy kept pretty quiet, and the deacon began to fondly hope that his adopted son might turn out a good missionary after all.

But Jimmy didn't have any idea of doing so, as the incidents which furnish matter for this chapter will show.

One Sunday afternoon Jimmy went over to Bob's and beckoned that youngster out with a very mysterious air.

"Got something to show you, Bob," said he.

"What—patent fish rod?"

"Nixey."

"Paper bustle for your girl?"

"No."

"Stole the deacon's wig and going to use it for a gun-cleaner?"

"Wrong ag'in; something tip-top; come out behind the barn and I'll show you."

Of course Bob was willing, and the two left for the rear of the barn.

Getting in a secluded spot, Jimmy put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a small parcel.

"Playin' cards!" cried Bob, his eyes as big as Bowery oyster stews.

"Ke-rect," murmured Jimmy; "dere dey is, kings an' queens, an' Jacks, all a hanging out together without caring a darn for each other. Guess dey must be Mormonites."

"Where'd you get them?" asked Bob.

"Found 'em in a dew drop."

"Taffy! Can't you tell a fellow?" whined Bob.

"Well, I bought 'em of an old cuss dat didn't have any friends, fer a quarter. Told him I was goin' ter start a faro-bank wid dem fer the benefit of the mishunaries."

Bob laughed and examined the cards carefully.

"Bang-up," said he, examining them lovingly; "regular top-shelvers."

"You bet," emphasized Jimmy; "monnygram backs an' a prize varying from a house an' lot to a pin-cushion in every one. Wanter play with dem?"

Of course Bob wanted to play with them.

His father had positively forbidden him to ever touch a card, and consequently Bob would have walked through a blazing volcano with his shoes off to gaze at a pack.

"Then come along," said Jimmy, "an' we'll start a game in my bedroom. I'll be the dealer and boss of the game, an' yer can be the flat."

"What do you do?" insinuated Bob, whose knowledge of sporting parlance was very limited.

"Rakes in the ducats an' slings out the cards," explained Jimmy.

"An' me?"

"You loses yer money, and gits fired out fer cheatin'." And Jimmy laughed heartily to see the look of dismay on Bob's face.

"Never mind, old man," continued he; "I wuz only givin' you G. G.—gum games. We'll play fer love."

"All right," replied Bob; and the two chums were about starting off, when a deep voice interrupted them:

"Jimmy Grimes, fo' de Lawd, I'll tell youse fader."

Jimmy jumped as if he had swallowed a tooth-pick, and it had formed a suspension bridge across his throat.

"Who's that?" cried he, while Bob wished that he could change into a tree for about five minutes.

"It's me," repeated the same voice; and a second afterward Pomp came crawling down from the hay mow, where he had been fighting flies and snoozing alternately.

"Jimmy Grimes," repeated he, "ain't youse 'shamed of yourself? Habbing a pack ob cards, on de Sabbath day, too!"

"Oh, dat's all right," said Jimmy, with a wink; "they ain't cards, Pomp."

"What are dey, den?"

"Mississippi River prayer-books."

"Nuffin ob de sort," persisted Pomp. "Dey is cards—playing-cards—dat's used ter gamble wid. Jimmy, I'se a good mind to tell your fader on you."

"He wouldn't care."

"He wouldn't, hey? Dis cullud man would bet him head dat if de deacon knew youse had dose cards he'd talk so forcibly to you wid his cane dat you'd walk round dis heah barn yard on crutches fo' a year or two."

"But you won't tell, Pomp?" coaxed Jimmy.

"I won't, hey? You don't know. I'se a church member; an' bein' found wid cards on Sunday is ag'inst de Scripters."

"You won't, though. What do you suppose that stylish, open-work slippers, red-nannel petticoat, city wench up at Mrs. Pettigrew's said?"

"What?" eagerly asked Pomp, who had a sort of hopeless admiration for said city wench.

"Said dat you'd be the handsomest nigger around, if it wasn't for one thing."

"What's dat?"

"That you're so homely that if you should meet a funeral you'd scare the corpse out of its coffin."

Bob, as usual, snickered, and Pomp felt aggrieved.

"De deacon shall know 'bout dem cards, shuah," said he, moving diagonally away.

"Don't get up on your upper lip," entreated Jimmy; "we was only fooling. Come up, and see us play poker."

"Draw poker?"

"Course. Come along."

Pomp, like any other ducky, couldn't resist the temptation to see a game of poker.

"Well," said he, "I'll come; but 'member, Jimmy Grimes, I'se only doing dis as a pussional favor for youse; 'member dat."

"Oh, certainly," said Jimmy. "I'll mark it down in my notebook with a whitewash brush. Come along, culls."

This time the culls did come along, and reached Jimmy's bedroom in safety.

Going to work, they extemporized a table out of two chairs and a checker board, and soon had a flourishing game.

At first Pomp wouldn't play, but soon he chipped in and took a hand.

"I see dat 'ere pile ten cents," said he, sitting on his cards for fear somebody might see them.

"I'm yer Prushian cauliflower," chirruped Jimmy; "see yer and go ten better."

"Cover dat an' call ye, if dis nigger has ter live on bladder pie and wind sauce for six months," shouted Pomp; "what has yer got, chile?"

"Four kings," said Jimmy, showing up.

"Busted, by golly!" groaned Pomp, sinking back in his seat; "dere goes a whole week's wages. I've only got three miserable queens. De Laird knows how I is gwine ter take my gal to de fair. 'Spects I'll have ter knock down on de kerlection plate."

"Then they orter provide yer with a bell-punch," laughed Jimmy.

"I'm a hunky boy, though; twenty in, and—"

Just then a knock sounded on the locked door.

"The deacon," cried Jimmy.

In an instant the chairs were flung back in their places, the checker board jammed under the bureau, and while Jimmy went to the door, Bob grabbed a hymn-book and commenced reading it upside down, while Pomp gritted his teeth and looked as if he wanted to go home.

"Shove the cards away," whispered Jimmy, as he fumbled with the door knob.

Bob snatched the cards bald-headed, and hurriedly put them in the coat-tail pocket of a long frock coat which hung up against the wall.

"Guess they won't walk out of there," muttered he, going back to his seat and reading his hymn-book sideways.

Hardly had he done so before the deacon stalked in in his shirt-sleeves.

"What's this?" asked he, gazing sharply around.

"Praise and prayer-meeting," answered Jimmy, honest as a marble seraph on a tombstone.

The deacon looked as if he did not believe it; but he contented himself with murmuring:

"Been singing?"

"Better bet so," Jimmy replied; "two men paralyzed downstairs; eight dead next door, and a woman kicking with the cramps around the corner; ain't been singing over ten minutes, either."

"Did you sing, Pomp?" the deacon inquired, not deigning to notice Jimmy's fairy tale.

"Y-yes, sah," stuttered Pomp, afraid of giving himself away; "I sung base, sah."

"Third base, and he got put out on a fly-note," put in the irrepressible Jimmy.

"You'll be put out of my house if you don't behave yourself," said the deacon, knowing that something was wrong somewhere, but not able to find it out for certain. "Hand me my coat, James."

"Where is it, sir?"

"There—on the wall."

And the deacon pointed to the very identical garment in which Bob had deposited the cards.

At this action Bob looked as if he had been struck with a clothes pole, while Pomp's teeth shattered.

"If de deacon finds dem cards," reflected he, "dere'll be a funeral at dis chile's house to-morrow widout any funder invitations."

"Oh, brace up!" said Jimmy, passing by them with the coat; "the old man won't collar us."

Then aloud:

"Here's your ulster, dad."

The deacon took it and put it on, the boys feeling as if they were standing around a bon-fire made of a keg of powder while the operation was transpiring.

But at last the coat was safely on, and then its owner said:

"Get your hat, James, and come with me."

"Where?" asked Jimmy, looking as if he didn't want to go a cent's worth.

"To Sunday-school."

"Cert'nly," responded Jimmy, with unexpected alacrity, as he cocked his hat over one eye; "dat allus was my boss racket. I'm

a team of oxen and a little bull calf on Sunday-school. Used ter have a class there myself once; ired the lessons down dem kids' throats like a little man."

Whack! went the deacon's hand against Jimmy's ear, and that young man went to greasing the wall paper with his hair.

"No more such talk," the deacon thundered, "or you'll get more."

"Got all I want," sighed Jimmy, rubbing the side of his cranium to find out whether his father hadn't left one or two fingers there;

"nuthin' hoggish about me—wouldn't even look cross-eyed at dem if they was selling ten for three cents."

"No insolence," remarked the deacon; "step lively, sir," and then the pair went out of the room to slow music.

"Dat wuz a close shave," said Pomp to Bob, as they, too, filed out at a respectful distance behind the first couple; "de deacon's a peaceful old chap enuff, but let him git his back up and den—dis nigger wants ter git in his little bed wid de door bolted!" with which wise remark Pomp branched off to his castle, while Bob went home over the fences, embracing himself all the way to think how he did not get caught, and mentally vowing that the next time he played cards on a Sunday it would be in some underground dungeon where even a potato bug couldn't get in.

Meanwhile the deacon had been giving Jimmy a double-decked, second-breasted, six-stories-and-a-flag-pole lecture on his wickedness, to which Jimmy listened like a cherub.

"I hope," said the deacon, in conclusion, "that in the future you'll be a better boy."

"Nixey, Jim," thought the little scapegrace to himself, but he didn't say so. He thought that it wouldn't be healthy for him to do so.

Instead he put on a lamb-like mug, and murmured:

"Arter this I'm going to try to be a Glory Hallelujah boy with a white, amen necktie."

The deacon groaned in the soreness of his spirit, but as the Sunday-school was right at hand, he didn't smooth the bosom of Jimmy's pants as he would like to have done.

"Don't let us both go in together, dad," warbled Jimmy, as they scraped their feet before entering the door; "somebody might think I knew you, an' besides, I'd rather go in on a lone hand."

The deacon smiled a knowing smile, and remarked as he pushed Jimmy forward:

"Your scheme is slightly transparent, James. I would go in, and you would follow the first road home."

"Sold ag'in," murmured Jimmy. "The old man's gettin' orfully fly. 'Spect, though, I better brace right up an' show the folks inside that I ain't no snow man!"

With this observation, he floated airily into the Sunday-school behind the deacon, who walked as if his undershirt was composed of cast-iron and would not allow him to bend his back. But this was the deacon's regular Sunday walk, put on Saturday night and slid off Monday morning.

The superintendent, a mild, middle-aged man, with a general appearance of having banqueted upon milk and water for the most of his life, approached the deacon eagerly.

"Ah, Brother Grimes," said he, "this is indeed a pleasure."

"Equally so on my part," returned the deacon, taking the other's extended hand, and wobbling it backward and forward, while Jimmy winked at a red-headed boy whom he knew and shook hands with himself.

"Who is our young friend?" asked the superintendent, beaming benignly upon Jimmy.

"My adopted son," replied the deacon. "Jimmy, this is Mr. Brannigan."

"Where's his band?" said Jimmy.

"What band?"

"Brannigan's Band," of course."

Two or three little chaps on the front seats smiled aloud, and Mr. Brannigan blushed.

"You are a little forward," said he, "but I like your looks."

"Like yours, too," returned Jimmy, saucy as a cock sparrow.

"When did dey take you out of the corn field?"

"What corn field?" stammered Mr. Brannigan.

"The corn field where dey had yer stood up to scare away crows."

Half a dozen boys laughed, the deacon felt as if he could see Jimmy made into bird seed without sighing, and Mr. Brannigan looked grieved.

Jimmy noticed it, and his conscience smote him, but the lad's impudence was part and parcel of him, and he couldn't help being saucy to save his neck.

"Sorry I spoke, sir," said he, "but you needn't feel bad about it. I was just slinging you a little moonlight on an oyster shell, that was all."

Mr. Brannigan had a faint suspicion for a moment that Jimmy was addressing him in choice Egyptian, for Mr. Brannigan was a good man, and didn't know any more about slang than he did about arising cats.

So he looked foolish, and said:

"Wouldn't you like to go into a class, young man? Does your biblical knowledge amount to much?"

"Don't know him," said Jimmy, decidedly.

"Know who?" asked the astonished superintendent.

"Bibillycal Knowledge. What target company does he train with?"

"I am not talking about a person. I mean is your knowledge of the Scriptures extensive?"

"Very," smiled Jimmy. "It takes two barns and a kerridge house to keep it all in. I'm solid on it every time."

"I guess I'll ask you a few questions," said Mr. Brannigan, seeing that the deacon had moved away, and was talking with an old hen who engineered the melodeon.

"Ask away," replied Jimmy, stopping himself in the midst of a jig step; "the dickshunary is open."

"Who was the first man?"

"Oh, Gawge—Gawge Washington; fust in pieces, fust in war, and fust in the hearts of his countrymen!" shouted Jimmy at the top of his voice.

The school started, the teacher bustled up, and Mr. Brannigan felt discouraged.

"Verily, the boy is incorrigible!" he sighed. "James, you better take your place right over there," indicating a certain class.

"Where dat animated mock-turtle with snow shovel ears is a-feeding it to the boys?"

"Yes," gasped Brannigan, in holy horror, while Jimmy, skipping down to the old fellow pointed out, said, as he shoved himself into the class:

"I'm come here, old man, to be turned into a regular white-winged, sunshining angel. So start the old machine!"

The old machine was started by Jimmy's being sat down rather forcibly on a bench and there we leave him to go back to the deacon.

"Deacon," simpered the giddy young thing of some fifty springs, to whom he was talking, "would you do me a favor?"

"A million!" said the deacon, gallantly.

The old maid smiled, and from behind the melodeon fished out a big card-board motto, confined in a walnut frame, with the inscription, "Feed my lambs," worked on it in blue worsted.

"This is my work," said she, feeling like a modern Sapphira, for it wasn't her work at all, she having bought the whole thing at an auction, "and I would like you to present it to the school on my behalf."

Of course the deacon looked as pleased as if he had struck a gold mine, and said that he would be most happy to do so.

"Wait till after the lesson is over," whispered the old maid, with a killing glance that did not affect the deacon at all, for he wasn't on the marry just then.

"Certainly," said the deacon. So when the lesson was over he communicated his intention of making the presentation to Mr. Brannigan.

That gentleman rang the bell, the scholars came to order, and Jimmy, who had just driven his teacher speechless by asserting that Moses ran a saw-mill on the Red Sea, and that Pharaoh was his hired man, leaned back against his seat and wondered what came next on the bill of fare.

He soon found out.

With a smile on his mild face, Mr. Brannigan advanced and introduced the deacon.

The deacon stepped forward, coughed, glared at the boys and girls before him, as if he intended chewing their heads off, and then began:

"My dear children, this is a most elegant day: the sky is blue, the birds carol their sweetest lays, everything is lovely, and——"

"The goose hangs high!" chirped Jimmy, apparently in confidence to a fly on the ceiling.

The deacon stopped short and frowned, and Jimmy's teacher wished that he could drive that good little lamb through the floor with a club, and never lay eyes on him again.

But as Jimmy went on studying the fly, the deacon proceeded in his discourse.

"Children," said he, "you should all come to Sunday-school and learn to do and say what is right. I knew a boy once—a bad, wicked boy—who went fishing one Sabbath instead of going to Sunday-school. What happened, my dears? Coming home a mad dog met him, bit him, and the next day the crape was hanging on his door knob."

Here the deacon paused for effect, and Jimmy improved the opportunity to shout, in a stage whisper:

"Give it to dem, dad. Tell dem about the good little boy dat went fer a misshunary an' got chawed up by Jersey skeeters."

Some of the scholars giggled, and the deacon registered a mental vow to pet Jimmy with his biggest cane as soon as he got home.

Still the presentation had to be gone on with, and he thought that he might as well hurry through it.

So he held the motto up to the admiring gaze of the Sunday-school, and remarked:

"This, my young friends, is a present to you from Miss Alvira Simmens."

Here Miss Simmens tried to appear unconscious, and felt half afraid that her false teeth were slipping out, while the deacon continued:

"Of all the uses to which paste-board is put, this is the best. Playing-cards, the devil's prayer-books, are the worst. My beloved hearers, beware of a man who carries cards around with him. He will do you no good; you should shun him as you would the plague."

Getting a little excited, the deacon reached around in his coat-tail pocket for his bandanna.

Seizing the handkerchief, he gave it a pull, and as he did so, the pack of cards put in by Bob floated to the floor.

Then ensued a grand old hurrah.

Miss Simmens fainted dead away, Mr. Brannigan looked as if he expected to see the roof cave in next, Jimmy danced around for joy, while from the body of the school ensued cries of:

"The old hypocrite!"

"Put the old sinner out!"

"Ain't he got brass!"

"Coming around here and addressing us with a pack of cards in his pocket."

"He's a nice deacon, he is."

Meanwhile poor Deacon Grimes regarded the cards on the floor as if they were two-headed snakes.

"I—I can't explain it," groaned he. "Who could a put those cards in my pocket? Jimmy, did you?"

"Of course not," answered Jimmy, as honest as an oyster. "Take me for a gambler, do you?"

"Well, this stumps me," slowly articulated the deacon. "I guess I better go home."

"I guess you'd better, too," snarled Miss Simmens, suddenly reviving; "you're a nice deacon, ain't you? you bald-headed, nasty, dirty, whited sepulcher."

"Silence, woman," ordered the deacon, waving her off with an umbrella.

"I'll shut up your crooked old mouth!" she yelled, and raising the motto, she dealt the deacon a vigorous rap over the head with it.

Uttering a cry, the deacon fled, and Jimmy followed, first up-setting Miss Simmens over Mr. Brannigan.

The deacon stalked home without uttering a word, and spent the following week in trying to discover where he had got the cards. But he never found out.

CHAPTER VII.

Although the deacon was a good, liberal-minded man in many ways, yet in one respect he was not so. That is to say that he was rather stingy; a dollar in his eye looked nearly the size of an elephant.

This was rather hard on Jimmy, who, boy-like, could have spent a dollar a day if he had had it, and who hated to be continually short, for the deacon only allowed him ten cents a week, payable every Monday night.

So Jimmy determined to strike a little bonanza on his own hook if he could, the sessions of the Turnover Academy, to which he was going, having not yet commenced for the winter.

So he hunted around for several weeks for a chance to make a quiet stake, but the opportunities for doing so seemed as rare as stars in the day time.

Finally, he was just going to give up in disgust, when, chancing to pass by the Turnover grocery one morning, he saw a lop-sided sign bearing the inscription, "Smart Boy Wanted," stuck in one corner of the single fly-bespattered window.

Jimmy read it, stood stock still for a second, and then, in the exuberance of his delight, put a head on a passing black-and-tan with an oyster can.

"Whoop!" exclaimed he, sticking his thumbs under his suspenders. "I guess I am. I'll jest waltz in, git the job, git promoted, git a mortgage on the place, fire the boss out, an' afore next year this time will be running that 'ere grocery myself. Dat's the kind of a prairie hen I am."

So he jammed his hat down until he looked like a bean pole under an awning, tucked his pants into his fairy boots, and marched into the store as if he was second cousin to Charley Ross.

The store's owner, a fat old chap by the name of Buffers, was reposing on the counter when Jimmy came in, and eyed him curiously.

"Want a quart of 'lasses or some harness oil for the deacon?" said he, getting down.

"No, sir," answered Jimmy, appropriating a nearby apple, "house is full of molasses an' the deacon's swimming in harness oil. I've come on dis exploring expedition by myself."

"Well, what do you want?" asked Mr. Buffers.

"You see," Jimmy replied, taking a statuesque attitude against a mackerel keg, "perliteness is everything in the business, ain't it?"

"Yes," acknowledged Mr. Buffers, absently chalking one finger nail with a piece of lime, and wondering what in thunder Jimmy was driving at.

"An' a nobby, good-looking chap with grease on his hair and a water pail collar, dat is perlite to the men, makes love to all the old women, an' tickles the girls under the chin, is bound to git along?"

"Ye-es."

"Specially if he is allus willing to bounce out of the store and kill a rooster for a lone widow, or play ball with the boys, an' take in all the surprise parties in the neighborhood, 'sides seeing the solid men home, and telling their wives that they're sea-sick whenever dey get full of jig-water."

"S'pose so," assented Mr. Buffers.

"Therefore, you'll see," argued Jimmy, "dat there's millions in it to the man who can lay hold of such a chap as I spoke of. Why, the feller dat gets said chap will hev nothing ter do but ter float around in a golden canal boat, with six niggers keeping him from getting sun burnt, inside of six months."

"What are you driving at?"

"Just this: I'm the gorgeous sunflower that can set you up in a marble palace, with a fishing pond in the back yard, if you'll hire me as your boy."

"Hardly believe you'll do," replied Mr. Buffers, who knew Jimmy's general reputation for mischief.

"All right," responded Jimmy, carelessly arising; "Mudhead will take me; he's wore the knees out of his Sunday pants a begging me to come with him. Said that he'd give me ten dollars every Saturday, chuck in a three-dollar ulster, and let me have six days off a week if I wanted them."

Mudhead was the man who kept an opposition store at Cranberryville, a town two or three miles from Turnover, and though Mr. Buffers suspected that Jimmy was relating parables, yet he did not know but what there might be a little truth in his remarks.

So he scratched his head and determined, if possible, to outwit his rival.

"What do you want a week?" inquired he.

"Some fellers," responded Jimmy, with a virtuous air, "would strike you for a couple of thousand, but I'm not that sort. I kin live in gilded luxury on five dollars, an' yer needn't mind telling the coachman to drive me home nights."

"Five dollars is a good deal," reflected Buffers.

"Think of the custom I'll draw," Jimmy urged; "think of the gals that will come a toddling here jest as soon as I am at the back of the bar, to lay in six weeks stomach ache by buying those cast-iron candies of yours, 'cos dey want to git me ter smile on dem. You bet I'm a masher."

"I'll give you four," said Buffers, apparently unmoved by Jimmy's word painted picture.

Jimmy had in reality made up his mind to get about a two and a half dollar salary, and therefore was delighted at Buffers' offer. But he didn't act so.

He surveyed the red herring hanging above his head with an air of calm resignation, and murmured:

"S'pose I'll have to take it to oblige you. When shall I begin?"

"Right away," returned Buffers, with unexpected alacrity; "there's a circus over to Cranberryville, and I guess that I'll go. There won't be anybody much in before I get back, I reckon. I'll only take two or three hours."

Then he marched Jimmy around the store for ten or twenty minutes drilling into him the price of the various articles, and finally departed, leaving our good little hero to solitude, and a battered and torn copy of the *Grocers' Guide* which looked as if somebody had been using it to make fly traps with.

"Ain't this ice cream and cake?" grinned Jimmy, as he gave the cat the electric bounce out of the chair and squatted down himself.

"Nuthin' to do and nobody to boss. Ah, tickle me with a hen's feather," and he lay off like a duke.

By and by he thought he would take a swing around the circle and investigate things.

He did investigate.

Before he got through the raisin drawer looked as if a flock of grasshoppers had boarded there for a week, and there wasn't enough cinnamon sticks left to pick your teeth with.

"Charge it to profit and loss," cried he, grandly, to an imaginary bookkeeper, as he swallowed the last raisin and make a skirmish on the candy jars.

Just then the first customer appeared.

She was a girl of about sixteen whom Jimmy had long admired at a distance—quite a distance—as she was two feet or so taller than he.

"Where's Mr. Buffers?" asked she, staring around in surprise.

"Been arrested fer manslaughter," informed Jimmy, politely; "seems he's married four or five wives, an' dey're goin' ter hang him for arson. I'm his successor. What kin I oblige you with?"

"Queer I never heard of this before," mused the girl. "Mr. Buffers was here this morning."

"The sheriff snatched him just seventeen minutes ago," said Jimmy, totally unable to restrain his born propensity for getting folks on a string, "an' as the old man didn't want folks to see him get arrested, dey boxed him up, labeled him 'soap,' and carted him away in a truck."

"Gracious!" ejaculated the girl, "who would a thought it?"

"Nobody," finished Jimmy; "what is it I kin soothe my heart by serving you?"

"Pint of syrup, please."

"Certainly; take it home in a box, or shall I tie it up in blue paper with a brown string?"

The girl laughed, and said she guessed he had better put it in a tin pail.

"I'll bring back the pail," she said.

"Don't mention it," warned Jimmy, as he let the syrup run; "keep the pail; use it to grow morning glories in. Why, we're just floating in tin pails; give 'em away with every pair of shoe-strings."

Then he remarked to himself, as he handed the pail over:

"You can bet high I'm going to be popular with customers if it busts old Buffers. Mark it down on your collar and keep it in mind."

In pursuance of this noble resolve, when his customer handed him the syrup money, he indignantly repudiated it with a lofty wave of his hand.

"Keep it, miss," said he: "every hiding-place around here is a-bushing out with money. I've got two or three thousand dollars hid in my shoes now, and I don't want any more. Git some perfumery fer yourself, and make your beau think he's wandered into a cologne manufactory when he sits by you."

"I haven't any beau," she said, blushing.

"Mc neither," replied Jimmy, wishing that his hands were not so big, and that he had his hair combed.

"You're Deacon Grimes' son?" queried she.

"Yes, mum."

"If—if you should chance to call around some night next week I might be at home," said she, laying down a pink pasteboard, and seizing the pail of syrup, she scudded out of the store in a hurry, casting a pouting glance over her shoulder at Jimmy, as she vanished through the doorway.

Jimmy looked boiled from his neck up, as he fastened on the card.

"Mash number one," grinned he, reading the German script legend. "'Miss Ella Haines.' She's gone sure! Wonder what it

was, my black and blue eye, or leg of mutton ears? Will I come and see?—you bet!"

But his congratulatory self-commendations were interrupted by the appearance of an old woman with a market basket.

Jimmy knew her at once; her name was McCann, and she ran a boarding-house a little ways out of the village.

"Hello, Mrs. McCann!" cried he, winking festively at her. "Come down to lay in the poison for your boarders? Got jest what you want—a lot of old leather overshoes that you can paint over, and trot out for tenderloin steak, and spring chicken. Most of your boarders will leave dere teeth on dere plates when they get up from the table, and you kin collect them, and sell 'em ter make over into pianner keys."

"I want seven and a half pounds of butter," said Mrs. McCann, scornfully, elevating her nose to the level of her false front.

"Cert'nly," responded Jimmy, bustling around and executing the order; "bald-headed butter—hairs to be dropped in accordin' to taste afore administering. Have it packed away in sawdust, and sent home in a freight car, ma'am?"

"None of your impudence," snarled Mrs. McCann; "the Lord knows why the deacon ever adopted such a saucy, good-for-nothing imp as you."

"S'pect that he does, but I never asked him," Jimmy returned, wetting the butter with the pat. "Better chain this butter to you, ma'am, for it's so strong that it might knock you down if it ever gets loose."

"This is the last time I'll trade here. I did not come to be insulted, and Mr. Buffers must be out of his head to employ you to wait on customers."

"No, he ain't; he knows chestnuts when he sees them. Anythin' else I can put on the slate for you, ma'am?"

"Quart of dried peas," snapped Mrs. McCann.

Jimmy stopped in his work and favored her with a knowing contortion of his eye.

"I tumble," said he; "pea soup for breakfast, boiled peas for dinner, pea pudding for supper, an' galvanized peas to pass round in the cake basket up in the parlor. Guess I'll come and live with you."

"Wouldn't have you in the house for millions," Mrs. McCann savagely uttered, as she grabbed her purchases and took the rapid git; "if I ever catch you when I'm feelin' mad, young man, I'll bite your head off."

"Dere goes the only gurl I ever loved," soliloquized Jimmy, following her to the door at a respectful distance. "Her boarders love her, too. Why, if dey heard dat she was suddenly assassinated, dey'd light up the house from top to bottom, stick an American flag over the front door, and hire a brass band to go ahead of them to her funeral."

Then, as business was slack, Jimmy amused himself for half an hour by throwing potatoes at a cat on the window sill of a house opposite, and as it was very probable that every potato would smash a pane of glass, or knock somebody's eye out, the amusement was very entertaining.

But a stop was put to it by the arrival of a farmer with a team of oxen and a load of grain bags, filled, which he proceeded to dump before the store, as Mr. Buffers had ordered him.

Jimmy knew what to do at once.

The meal bags were to be stored in the floor above the store, which was used as a sort of stock-room.

Accordingly, with the assistance of the farmer, he rigged a pulley and rope from the third story, and set to work hoisting the bags up.

This operation completed, the farmer drove away, and Jimmy was just about taking down the pulley and rope, when Bob arrived on the scene.

Bob's face was expressive of the greatest possible astonishment, as he gazed at Jimmy.

"Hallo!" said he. "what are you doing here?"

"Workin'," said Jimmy, laconically.

"What at?"

"Grocery biz."

"For old Buffers?"

"Yes."

"How much are you getting?"

"Six dollars a day."

"Go 'way!"

"True as steel," and Jimmy went on fooling with the rope.

But by and by he thought Bob would make a good meal bag.

So he persuaded that young gentleman to allow himself to be dangled airily.

Bob did not object, and then Jimmy took a turn until the sport became monotonous.

The boys were just about quitting it when they perceived the deacon coming. Jimmy instantly galloped around the corner of the store.

"I ain't been home since morning," explained he to Bob, "and the old man wants to praise me for it."

"Praise you with a club," said Bob, who knew how it was himself.

"Jest so," smiled Jimmy, "and I guess afore I do go home, that I'll get my pants copper plated on the bottom, and stow away a lot of bricks in my pistol pocket. The old man hits hard; he ain't got consumption worth a cent."

Meanwhile the deacon marched along, totally unconscious of the close proximity of his scapegrace son.

As he reached the store he met an old, bent-over darky, one of those apparently immortal negroes to be found in every country town.

"Well, Uncle Pete," said he, "how's your rheumatism?"

"Bad," groaned Uncle Pete, leaning on his cane; "mortal bad, boss. Seems to me, sometimes, as if dat rheumertiz wuz ter carry de ole man away. De doctahs say dat I'm sufferin' from affectation ob de lungs, and dat am a shuah sign ob hasty combustion."

"Nonsense, Uncle Pete," replied the deacon, "you're good for another hundred years yet."

"Oh, no," sighed the old darky, "de angel am calling me now. But 'pears ter me dat Buffers am gettin' awful careless, leaving dose 'ere pulley ropes layin' round widout nobody to take care ob dem."

"Sure enough," considered the deacon, but just then his attention was attracted by something on the other side of the street.

He turned to gaze at it.

The movement brought his back directly against the pulley rope. So close that the big iron hook at its end dangled directly beneath his coat-tail.

Jimmy perceived the state of affairs, and a happy thought struck him.

"By guns, Bob," cried he, "we'll make a flying angel out of the deacon."

"You bet," grinned Bob, and the mischievous couple slid noiselessly out of cover and grasped the other rope.

"Now!" said Jimmy.

Both gave the rope a yank that threatened to dislocate their backbones.

The effect was immense.

The hook caught firmly under the deacon's coat, and the first thing that good old man knew he was going up in the air like a Japanese kite.

"Great hambone!" yelled he, as he ascended and made a grasp at Uncle Pete's woolly head. "What does this mean?"

"Jess you let go my hair!" howled Uncle Pete, an expression of anguish on his face, "or I'll hit you wid my crutch!"

But the deacon only clung on the harder, and as Bob and Jimmy were pulling their level best on their rope, the effect on the old darky was more painful than pleasing.

"Lemme go—lemme go!" he shouted, dancing around in total forgetfulness of his rheumatism; "de top ob my head am comin' off!"

"Oh, Lord!" groaned the deacon, swinging around in the air and coming kerslap up against the side of the store, "I don't understand this. Help, somebody!"

"It's dem are debbil's chilluns dat's histed you up on de pulley hook," explained Uncle Pete, as the deacon at last let go of his wool.

"Git out, you old nigger!" yelled Bob, indignant at being given away.

"Nigger waiter, hot pertater, bung—bung—bung!" taunted Jimmy.

"I'll murder youse boys," shrieked Uncle Pete, grabbing his crutch and making for the lads.

Jimmy hastily tied the rope against the barn.

"Guess the store wants watching," concluded he; "it won't be very healthy for me when dad tumbles to the racket. Come along, Bob."

"Wait till I give Uncle Pete his New Year's" begged Bob.

Then taking a tomato that smelt like a pig-sty, he let it fly.

It struck Uncle Pete across the nose, and he went over backwards as if somebody had knocked his legs up.

"Oh, Gabriel!" he squeaked, "I'se shot—send for de sheriff!"

"Send for somebody," pleaded the deacon, "my head is nearly knocked off against this infer—innocent barn, and my back is most cut in two. Who did you say played this trick on me?"

"Your son Jimmy, sah, an' I swar' fore all de angels dat—dat wicked Bob hab most knocked my head off!"

"Nonsense! shout for assistance." Uncle Pete set up a squeaky shout in which the deacon joined.

By and by help arrived in the persons of three or four nearby residents, who came running up out of breath.

"By Jerusalem, the deacon's in another muss!" exclaimed the first, taking in the deacon, who looked more like a flying angel than anything else.

"Drunk again!" said the second, who remembered the deacon's memorable spree.

"Been trying to steal the grain bags," growled an old woman. "got caught, and it's good enough for him."

In a few words the deacon briefly explained the situation and was lowered down.

"Where's Jimmy?" was his first question.

"In de store, sah," informed Uncle Pete.

The deacon took out his knife and cut a stout switch from along the roadside, while Uncle Pete chuckled in delight.

"Dem chillun is gwine to ketch fits," laughed he; "spect dat dey won't be able to walk fo' six months. Frow termater at 'spectable ole culled gemmen, will dey!"

Meanwhile the deacon had crept around to the front of the store, intending to slam down upon Jimmy with the force of a whirlwind.

But he did not slam the worth of a slate pencil.

For the very simple reason that the shutters were put up, the front door padlocked, and tacked up on a post was the sign:

"Store shet!

"gone To a funeral

"Be back to-morrow morning,

"J. Grimes."

Then the deacon threw his switch away and felt like standing still and hiring a good mule to kick him.

"The young rascal," muttered he, "won't I warm the wax in his ears when he does get home!"

But Jimmy did not go home that night at all.

He loafed around town till about ten o'clock, and then visited Pomp's.

He told Pomp the hurrah, and Pomp roared with laughter.

"Ki," said he, "I'd gib a dollar to see the old deke a-playin' but-terfly. Youse bettah lay right down on de floor, chile, an' stay wid me to-night, fo' if de deacon ketches you he'll spread you all ober de house."

So Jimmy went to sleep in Pomp's elegant mansion, with the carpet for a hair mattress and a boot for a pillow.

But even that was better than going home and getting on familiar terms with a cat-o'-nine-tails.

CHAPTER VIII.

Jimmy didn't go home the morning after he had elevated the deacon up in the air, because he thought that it would not be good for his general health to do so.

But he went down to the store bright and early and before Buffers.

When Buffers did come, though, he gave Jimmy a left-handed blessing with plenty of mustard thrown in.

"Look here, you young imp," he blustered, "what in thunder do you mean by shutting up store at three o'clock, raising Cain with your father, and insulting my best customer, Mrs. McCann?"

"Motional insanity, sir."

"Emotional blazes!" growled Buffers.

"Nearly got hit in the head with a brick when I was little, and I haven't got over it yet," protested Jimmy.

"Then I don't want no crazy folks around my store," Buffers remarked, taking down the shutters; "you are discharged."

"All right," retorted Jimmy. "Mudhead will have a torchlight procession all by himself when he hears of it. He come around here yesterday when you were gone to the circus, and offered me anything I wanted if I'd go with him. Said he'd fix me up a pirate cave in the back yard, and let me have a taffy pull."

"Mudhead's a fool," surlily observed Buffers, unlocking the front door.

"Jest what he says about you," said Jimmy, making an elaborate feint of moving off. "Good-by, Mr. Buffers."

"Where are you going?" asked that gentleman.

"To Mudhead. Guy, won't the gals come tearing into his store when dey hear I'm dere! Mudhead'll be busting with tin afore the week's out."

"Come back," said Buffers, who hated Mudhead, as rivals in the same business always hate each other; "I was only fooling. Take a broom and go to work sweeping out."

Jimmy was back again with a subdued grin on his face.

"Scooped in again," murmured he, pointing at the unconscious Buffer, who was wrestling with a barrel of flour. "Oh, chalk it down on your collar!"

Then embracing a broom, Jimmy went to work, and swept away very industriously until an old lady came in.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Haines," said Mr. Buffers, politely.

Jimmy pricked up his ears.

"Dat must be the mother of the sunflower dipped in glue dat's mashed on me," reflected he.

"What can I serve you with, Mrs. Haines?" continued Buffers.

"Box of matches and a pair of shoe-strings," she answered.

"Certainly, ma'am."

And Buffers did the required articles up, and received the small fortune that they were worth with a low bow.

But still Mrs. Haines lingered, and seemed loath to leave the store.

"Anything else, Mrs. Haines?" asked Buffers, noticing her hesitation.

"The tin pail, sir," simpered the old lady.

"What tin pail?"

"The tin pail you give away to your customers with everything they buy."

Buffers stared at her as if in momentary expectation of seeing her develop into a furious maniac.

"We don't give tin pails away," said he; "you're mistaken, ma'am."

"Not much," persisted Mrs. Haines. "P'raps I ain't so young, sry and fresh-lookin' as my gal, but for all that I want my tin pail."

"I always heard that insanity ran in the Haines family," Buffers gasped, having no more idea of Jimmy's exploit on the previous day than an old cow. "I tell you you won't get no tin pail unless you pay for it."

"I will get it."

"You won't get it."

"I'll stay here till I do get it," cried Mrs. Haines, her sturdy New England blood rising fast. "If you're going to give tin pails to gals, you've got to give them to old women, too."

"You stay here till you rot, and you won't get a free tin pail,"

ungallantly retorted Buffers, handling a yard-stick as if he would have given a good deal to punch Mrs. Haines in the head with it.

"Just you say that again, you bald-headed old monkey," shrieked Mrs. Haines.

Buffers said it again and grasped the cover of the salt barrel as a shield.

It was lucky he did so, for the old girl came for him like a thousand of bricks.

"You will insult me, hey?" demanded she, reaching over the counter to comb his face with her finger nails.

"Oh, you old cat, go 'way!" Buffers bawled, rapping her knuckles with the barrel cover. "Jimmy, for Heaven's sake rush out and tell the constable that Mrs. Haines has gone crazy!"

"Couldn't," Jimmy cheerfully replied; "dis here fight's got to have a referee, an' I'm that spring chicken. Time's up, old lady; give him one in the tater-trap, and then let his wind out!"

The lady addressed did not waste any time in chin music, but went to work.

Seizing the broom which Jimmy had laid down at the beginning of the muss, she danced into Buffers like a man-of-war against a mud fort.

Buffers got whacked in the mouth, and he got pelted in the eye, and touched over the nose, and caressed alongside of the head until he howled for mercy.

"Let up—let up!" shouted he, "and I will give you a cartload of tin pails."

"I know you will," said his fair assaulter, grimly. "Even if I don't powder myself all up, and put brickdust on my cheeks, I ain't to be trifled with. If my darter, Ella, can come in here and get a tin pail with a pint of sirup, I'm going to have a tin pail with a box of matches!"

"Who gave her a tin pail?" asked Buffers, as a strange and fearful thought flitted across his mind.

"That gentleman there," and she pointed to Jimmy.

It was now Jimmy's time to feel sick.

He would have liked to have been a birdie or a knothole, or anything else except himself for about five minutes.

And he tried to edge along in the direction of the door.

But Buffers caught him out on the fly, and yanked him to the home plate.

"Say!" yelled Buffers, pinching Jimmy's ear as if laboring under the impression that it was made of wax, "did you give a tin pail to Ella Haines?"

Jimmy saw that there was no use in prevarication, so he boldly replied:

"Of course I've got to make this here store popular with the gals, ain't I?"

Buffers looked at him as if he was a white-headed monkey with a copper tail, or some other equally astonishing phenomenon of natural history.

"How dare you?" he wrathfully uttered; "them pails are worth a quarter a piece. Did you give more than one away?"

"Ten," confessed Jimmy; "one gal had a wart on her nose, and I gave her two."

Buffers was so mad that he jumped up and down like a doll baby on a rubber string.

"I'll teach you to give away other folk's property!" shrieked he, and then he made it warm for our unlucky hero.

He dusted off the counter with him, and used him to sweep up the floor with, and then rolled him on the stoop and wiped his feet on him, and altogether raised a first-class exhibition of ground and lofty tumbling with Jimmy.

The deacon's son, though, didn't like it worth a continental.

"Gol darn it!" moaned he, as the irate Buffers knocked him down, and then kicked him up again; "blamed if I don't hope your old store will rot afore folks come into it! Get out, you old clump-footed, bandy-legged sucker! why don't you hit one of your size?"

"You'll do to practice on," grimly responded his boss. "Give away my tin pails, will you?" and he went on with the bouncing process.

Just as he had laid Jimmy over a mackerel keg and was knocking the wrinkles out of his pants with a tin dipper, Deacon Grimes slowly loomed through the doorway.

Buffers saw him in a moment, and dropped this instrument of vengeance in a hurry.

"Deacon," apologized he, "the young imp bothered me so, that I couldn't help giving him a few licks."

The deacon solemnly anchored himself on an upturned soap box.

"Brother Buffers," remarked he, "Solomon says: 'Spare the rod and spoil the child.' Brother Buffers, I suppose that the chastisement is merited, therefore continue it, and, Brother Buffers, hit him once or twice for me."

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Jimmy, as he heard this last speech, "now I am going ter git it. Wish dat Buffers would git paralyzed in both arms."

But no such occurrence happened, and Jimmy got a first-rate dressing.

By and by Buffers let him up and remarked, trying to straighten the tin dipper into its original form:

"There—I guess you've got about enough—now go to work!"

"Brother Buffers," put in the deacon, who was still pretty sore over the last trick Jimmy had played on him, "whenever my son needs punishment, do not hesitate to punish him."

Then the deacon winked mysteriously at Buffers, and Buffers smiled knowingly at the deacon, and the two marched away together.

"Two whisky-straight, an' put it on the slate," said Jimmy, as he saw them fade away into the back room of the tavern; "oh, the old hypocrites, wouldn't I like to get square on dem. Buffers will lick me when he wants to, will he? I guess not; I'll buy the worst old hoss-pistol dat I kin find, an' de next time dat he teches me I'll spill his blood all over the sweet pertaters."

His amiable reflections were interrupted at this juncture by the re-appearance of Mrs. Haines, who had slid out during Buffers' morning prayer with him.

"Bubby," said she, approaching him, "I feel sorry for you; it wasn't your fault."

"Bet your hoop-skirt on dat, old gal," chirped Jimmy. "Dat Buffers is a reg'lar slouch; can't appreciate bizness enterprise any more den a cast-iron mule."

"I believe you," corroborated the old lady, taking the weaker side, as all women do, "an' here's a big doughnut that I baked myself that I brought over for you."

"You're a stunning old brick," thanked Jimmy, and he meant it; "when I gets to be president, you can do all my washing!"

"Good-by," said Mrs. Haines, not waiting to hear the last part of his speech.

"Tra-la-loo—over the water," politely responded Jimmy, watching her till she turned the corner.

Then he tackled the doughnut, and munched away quite contentedly for a while until a thought struck him.

"Be the Heaven I see it all!" shouted he, a la Bowery tragedian, chucking the doughnut to the store cat. "I tumble to the old gal's game right away! Wants ter catch a son-in-law! Nixey Jim, its N. G.—New Jersey. S'pose she thinks dat ere doughnut will just do the business, but it won't. I'm saving for a rich widder with the gallopin' consumption."

The last reflection seemed to reassure Jimmy, and when Buffers returned, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, he found his clerk actively at work measuring potatoes and whistling "I am Such a Shy Young Girl," like a sore-throated mocking bird.

Jimmy, for a wonder, worked hard all that day, and Buffers, who, on the whole, was a kind-hearted man, noticed it, and concluded to make some amends for his severity of the morning.

"Jimmy," said he, about three o'clock, "I guess you can go now, if you want to, I reckon that I can run the store alone this afternoon."

"Bully," ejaculated Jimmy, and it didn't take him long to get out of the store.

Neither did it take him long to get to Bob's.

Bob was sitting on his barnyard fence, shying clam shells at unprotected chickens, when Jimmy appeared.

"Ho!" cried Bob, "got bounced already?"

"No, sir," came Jimmy's decisive reply, "got half a day off. Old Buffers thinks I'm a whole band chariot with a dog under the seat. Says he's going to give me the business in about a week."

"Givin' me fish worms on toast?" asked Bob, suspiciously.

Jimmy looked so honest as he gave a negative reply, that you could almost have fancied that you saw a pair of angel wings sprouting from his forehead.

"What are you going to do?" grunted Bob, getting down off the fence and exhausting all his energy in a ferocious shy with a scaler that made the rooster whom it hit think he had the brain fever.

By way of answering Jimmy pulled out of his pocket a dark, damp, queer-smelling substance in the form of an elongated square.

"What's that?" instantly questioned Bob.

"Does it look like a rootbeer bottle?" queried Jimmy.

"No."

"Or a stovepipe hat?"

"Of course not."

"Then what makes yer ask such foolish questions? Yer know what it is."

"Chocolate taffy?"

"Anybody could tell you were a hayseed hamfatter," groaned Jimmy. "Chocolate taffy, hey? Next you'll be lisping about bean lozenges and pork gumdrops."

"Ah, what is it, anyhow?" urged Bob, growing impatient.

"Ax me no questions and I'll tell yer no lies," Jimmy sagely said, making a feint of returning the article to his pocket.

But Bob snatched it, and closely examined it.

"Gewhillikens!" he exclaimed, "it's chewing tobacco!"

"Bet your sweet life it is!" Jimmy emphatically confirmed; "regular old niggerhead, honey-scented."

"Do you chew?" asked Bob, gazing half in awe at his chum.

To tell the truth, Jimmy didn't chew.

But do you suppose he was going to tell Bob so?

Not much.

He was a city clothes-line, and he wasn't going to knuckle to anybody.

"Of course I chew," affirmed he; "was brought up on it. Why, de fust bad thing I ever did was to pawn my nussing-bottle to buy 'Virgin Leaf' with. Jest hand me that plug."

Bob swallowed the whopper, and handed the tobacco back.

Taking a four-bladed knife—three blades of which were gone, and the fourth had the spine disease—from his pocket, Jimmy cut off a liberal chew.

Stuffing it in his mouth, he swaggered around, spitting like a sprinkling cart.

He wasn't big, and tough, and bad-hearted?

Oh, no!

Why, at that moment he would have refused to shake hands with the president, and been mad if Queen Victoria had gone by without bowing to him, and ordering her guards to fire a salute.

Bob watched him in rapt admiration.

"Give me a chew," said he, by and by.

Jimmy readily complied, and soon Bob was strutting around, too, painting up the side of the barn with tobacco juice.

But soon Bob began to feel slightly uneasy.

His lungs seemed to be trying to get down in his stomach, and his stomach was apparently trying to get up into his lungs.

Besides, his head felt as if it was on a pivot, and somebody was turning it around.

Every moment the feeling grew worse, and in about ten seconds Bob felt as if he would like to borrow some new inside for about half an hour.

The barn appeared to be blind drunk, too, and the fences were waltzing around in the wildest manner imaginable.

"J—Jimmy," stuttered he, catching a log as it whirled around him, "I'm s—sick. Guess I eat too—too many gr—gr—grapes!"

Jimmy burst into a loud laugh.

"Tain't grapes," said he, "It's terbacker. You're fresh yet, cull, an' it allers strikes a greeny that way; makes him think that a couple of crabs are fightin' a duel in his stomach."

"Oh, Jimmy," moaned Bob, "I'm going to die."

"Leave me a lock of your hair, then."

"If you only knew how sick I was you wouldn't make fun of me."

"Have another chew? swaller a cud?" asked the heartless Jimmy, producing the plug.

That was all Bob wanted.

He gave a sort of half-satisfied war-whoop, and then began vomiting as if he intended to vomit himself clean out of his shoes.

"Go in, old boy; chuck up your liver," advised Jimmy, watching him in high glee; "don't you want a cigar?"

"Ou—oup—urr!" gurgled Bob, in reply, and Jimmy felt that he was having a whole circus full of fun without paying a cent.

"Look at me," said he, swaggering around; "I'm brass-lined, I am, an' nothin' less den a live eel kin make me shaky. You're weak an' tender yet, but you'll get over it. S'pose dat I——"

Just then Jimmy stopped.

All of a sudden a strange sensation struck him just above the waistband.

It increased, and somehow things began to get mixed.

His head felt as if somebody was driving nails into it, and his legs were all snarled up together in a most inexplicable manner.

Besides, when he looked down he saw about seventeen different Bobs.

They all gazed up at him with pain-distorted faces, and groaned: "What's the matter with you?"

Jimmy tried to brace up.

"Guess I've been in the sun too much to-day," answered he, thickly; "g—guess I'll go home."

But he didn't.

Either the ground flew up and knocked him down, or he flew down and knocked the ground up, but anyhow he found himself lying face downward, with an unconquerable impulse to throw up everything he had ever eat, and a lot more besides.

"You sick, too!" gasped Bob.

"Sick," murmured Jimmy, game to the last; "not much; I'm only tired!" and then, with a wild gurgle, he commenced to let fly.

However, the boys had only an attack, and soon recovered.

"Thought that you was brass-lined?" sneered Bob.

"Guess dat the brass must a wore out, blame terbacker, anyhow. You see, dis is country plug. I'm used to the city kind."

But Bob refused to accept the explanation, and Jimmy proposed that they move over to his house.

Bob readily assented, and in a litle while they fetched up before the door of Deacon Grimes' mansion.

Mary Ann was standing in it, dressed up for the afternoon, and taking a breathing spell before boxing with the supper dishes.

The sight of her put a mischievous idea in Jimmy's head.

Carefully disuniting a small piece of plug, and concealing it in his hand, he crept up to her.

"Mary Ann," said he, coaxingly. "I've got something for you."

"What is it?" queried Mary Ann.

"Something nice to eat."

"Arrah, that's a faine lad. Hand it to me, Jimmy, mavourneen."

"Couldn't," grinned Jimmy; "open your mouth, and shut your eyes, and I'll give you something to make you wise."

"Shure it isn't worms or a nasty toad, bad cess to it, like that yees popped into me mouth the last toime?"

"Oh, I ain't a fooling now," reassured Jimmy, "nothing round-cornered about me. Just shut your peepers and open the mammoth cave."

Mary Ann complied, and shut her eyes tight as she could, and opened her extensive flash destroyer until it began to grow dark all around.

Dexterously Jimmy popped the tobacco into her mouth.

Her teeth closed on it, there was a moment of doubt, and then the boys scudded down the path as if a flash of lightning was on their track.

For, with a wild Irish yell, Mary Ann spit that tobacco out, and jumped around as if she was dancing on hot horseshoes.

"Mither av Moses!" she yelled, "it's poisoned I am. May the curse av St. Patrick light upon all the terbacker in the worruld an' upon that daysaving Jimmy Grimes. Oh, musha, let me get hold on him until I murder him completely, fooling a dacent Irish gurrul!"

Then she seized her favorite broom by the handle.

"The young imps will be coming up here again ter have the laugh on me, an', begorra, I'll give them Cromwell's bating."

Laughing at the anticipatory result, Mary Ann snugly ensconced herself behind one corner of the house.

"Whin the divils come around the corner may God presarve them," she laughed.

It happened, though, that the boys who had stole around not ten feet behind her, to a clump of lilac bushes, took the whole thing in and laughed harder than she did.

"Guess dat she'll starve to death afore we come."

"Hope she won't get tired," added Bob. "Hello, who's that coming!" and he pointed down the path.

"Why, it's the old man," Jimmy exclaimed. "Bet you half a cent dat Mary Ann will think that it's me and bless him with the broom."

Up the path, book in hand, came the unconscious deacon, while Mary Ann tightened her grasp on the broom.

"Whirra," said she, as his footsteps grew nearer, "it's him, be-dad, I'll welt the stuffing out of him!"

CHAPTER IX.

Nearer and nearer he drew to Mary Ann's hiding place.

She listened to his footsteps with a broad grin on her face, thinking that he was Jimmy.

"The young devil," muttered she, "he will be afther makin' himself so fresh wid his nasty terbacker. Bad cess to his sowl, but I'll learn him better!"

Jimmy punched Bob in the ribs.

"Hold your breath," whispered he; "ain't the old man going to get glory hallelujah?"

Jimmy's anticipation proved correct.

Just as the deacon's head turned the corner, Mary Ann waltzed in with the broom.

The first whack knocked the deacon's head clean up through the hat, the second made him think a brick house had fallen on his shoulders, and the third knocked his nose back among his ears.

"Great hambone!" yelled he, pawing wildly at the air; "help—murder—fire!"

"I'll fire yees—fire yees out!" responded Mary Ann, who was too much engaged in flourishing the broom to particularly notice whom she was hitting. "Put some nasty, dirty chewin' terbacky in my mouth, will yees?" and she fetched the deacon a crack that was good for a six months' stiff neck.

"Good Lord, Mary Ann," inquired the deacon, recognizing her voice, and nimbly dodging a blow that threatened to spread him all over the yard, "are you crazy?"

"It's me that will make yees crazy," she defiantly answered, bringing down the broom again with force enough to split a stone sidewalk.

Unfortunately the broom glanced off of the deacon's shoulder, and struck the big bee-hive under the kitchen window.

The broom stood it, but the bee-hive didn't.

It toppled to one side, and the bees came swarming out in a hurry.

Those bees were mad.

Every blessed bee meant business, and he was bound to get square on somebody.

About three thousand of them tackled the deacon and the remaining million or so started to give Mary Ann her New Year's.

"Almighty Abraham!" yelled the deacon, as the advance guard commenced operations on him, and he tore around that gravel walk as if his undershirt was on fire, howling like a fiend for help.

As for Mary Ann, it only took six little bees to take all the fight out of her.

In less than a minute she wouldn't have hit a wax doll.

"May the Virgin protect me," she shouted, vainly trying to keep off the obnoxious insects by tying her head up in her apron; "it is stung to death that I am," and she, too, started a little can-can all by herself.

Meanwhile, Jimmy and Bob were having a good time.

The deacon's and Mary Ann's antics were as good to them as a panorama with two or three menageries thrown in.

"Ain't it gaudy," grinned Bob, as the deacon insanely attempted to get rid of a bee, by butting his head against a tree.

"Gorgeous!" replied Jimmy; "stag Mary Ann a praying wid dat bee dat's chawing her nose up."

But that was all Jimmy had time to say.

He suddenly leaped up into the air, and hit his ear a crack that sounded like a pistol shot.

"Gol darn it!" shouted he.

"What's the matter?" asked Bob.

"Bees!" groaned Jimmy, trying his best to kick between his arms, and failing miserably.

"Cut it and run," advised Bob.

Jimmy took his advice, and put out of the yard like a house a-fire.

The deacon followed his example, and scudded down the main street, his coat tails sticking out in the wind, and a select crowd of honey-makers holding a camp-meeting on the top of his head.

"Hello, Deke," called out a sturdy farmer, "what's the matter?"

"Sick," suggested a pedestrian, standing still, while a small boy got inside of his coat in a jiffy, and hallooed "fire" like a fiend.

But the deacon answered none of his friends.

He just waved his hand wildly along, and went on like a second hand Mazeppa.

Until at last his mad career was checked by a hitching-post which got in his way, and turned out to be the strongest of the two.

Consequently, the deacon sat down with surprising suddenness, and had a select class in astronomy all to himself for about ten seconds.

But it fetched the bees.

When the deacon's head ceased swimming around, they had taken their departure to where the wood-twine bineth.

Then he explained the thing to the sympathizing crowd who had gathered around, and went home determined to lay out somebody.

But he didn't, for the simple reason that there was nobody to lay out, Mary Ann having packed up her duds, and with a head on her like an apple-barrel, gone to stay for a day or two with her sister, while Bob and Jimmy had scooted to the farmer's barn.

"Guess you got the worst of the racket," laughed Bob, gazing at Jimmy's bungled-up eyes, that the bees had closed gently for him.

"The old man got the worst," replied Jimmy; "didn't dem bees sock it to him! Reckon dat dey must have took him for a stick of sugar-cane."

"You'll get it when you get home," kindly assured Bob.

Jimmy winked knowingly.

"Nixey, Jim," said he, "I'll play innercent kid on him. Make him believe dat I waz out in de graveyard shedding tears over his grandmother's tombstone when the bee hurrah was on deck. Just chalk dat down on your collar."

But as Bob's collar was on the piano, or somewhere else, he didn't do as Jimmy requested, but contented himself with skipping into the house, and coming back, attended with two hunks—regular New England hunks—of molasses gingerbread.

"By gum, Jimmy," he said, as he tossed over the gingerbread, "I've struck oil."

"What is it?" queried Jimmy.

"Regular hold-your-breath hurrah."

"Who with?"

"Do you know that stuck-up, bandy-legged Yorker that's been hanging around my sister for the last day or so?"

"The stiff-necked Charlie in the red necktie and elevated railroad stovepipe?"

"That's the canary. Well, you know he thinks my sister is gone on him."

"Believe you. You see he takes himself for an awful masher. Has to have a fire company around him whenever he goes down Broadway, to keep the girls from kissing him," and Jimmy contentedly munched the gingerbread.

"And," continued Bob, "Maria, our hired girl, just told me that she heard him tell a feller down to the post-office that he was going to 'make aw—aw—slight visit of aw—an evening upon Miss Hoyt.'"

"Oh, Gawge, soothe me with a goose wing," commented Jimmy. "But say, Bob, what's that got to do with our racket?"

"Just this," Bob answered, "sister ain't home."

"Go 'way."

"True as steel. She's gone on a little picnic down to Cranberry-ville. One of her relations is dead, and she's swooped down to see if she's been left anything."

"I tumble; go on."

"Oh, she won't be home. We will, though. You know my father is an awful bad man?"

Here Bob paused, and grinned intelligently at Jimmy.

"And if he finds anybody in the house a calling on your sister he'll wipe up the floor with dem," Jimmy chimed in, grinning back at Bob.

"Exactly," said Bob, in delight. "I guess you know how the old thing works now. Sister's away, dad ain't home, mother's off a-feedin' on her sister in York, an' we'll give that masher a bad bouncing."

"Won't let up on him till he stakes us," added Jimmy.

"No, we'll strike him for about five dollars apiece," said Bob.

"That is bully," Jimmy commented. "An' say Bob, I'll get Pomp to help us."

"Honest Injun?"

"Sure—I'll go and see him right away."

"Bully," said Bob, "and don't forget, Jimmy, to be at the house about eight."

"Bet your head I won't," replied Jimmy, and then he went off in search of Pomp.

He found that colored gentleman fighting weeds in the back garden, and saluted him with:

"What are you goin' ter do to-night, old ink-stand?"

Pomp stopped working right away.

"Look a heah, Jimmy Grimes," cautioned he, "doan't youse get so pussional in your remarks, or I'll draw a razer on you; heah dat, chile, I ain't a tootin' my horn for nothing."

"Bad nigger—nigger eat paper collar!" taunted Jimmy, who did like to tease the darky.

"Dat'll do, sah. Youse'll keep right on till I rises up an' make youse tink dat a scurricane hab struck youse."

"Oh, brace up, I'm only fooling."

"Den go fool wid some other niggah. Folk dat come round me generally end by fooling wid de graveyard."

"Pomp," asked Jimmy, in an entirely different tone, "want to make a pot?"

"Pot of what?"

"Bullion—shekels—stamps?"

"Does I wanten go to de cullud hebben?" asked Pomp; "jest youse show me whar dere's de chance to rake in money an' I'll forgive you."

In a few words Jimmy explained the proposed frolic.

"All that you've got to do," he said, in conclusion, "is to get a big club and tear around the room as if you was dying to club thunder out of somebody."

"Play dat I was the maddest nigger dat ebber lived—make out dat I carries a pop, buttons my vest low, an' stabs folk wid clam shells?" insinuated Pomp, addressing a short prayer to an obstinate milk weed that refused to come out of the ground for any consideration.

"That's the trip-slip," remarked Jimmy, and with a few words of advice he went in and got his supper.

The deacon was sitting at the head of the table, presenting a general appearance of having been walked over with a lawn mower and then used to ram down cobble-stones with.

"Look as if you'd been on a tear, an' got ten days for it, old man," commented Jimmy, as he took his seat.

"I feel so, James," replied his dad, "but I think I would feel much better if Mary Ann was here."

"Why?"

"I'd like to see her for a moment—with a horsewhip," and the deacon clenched his hand suggestively.

"Funny, how she made love to you with the broom," carelessly put in Jimmy, as he raided upon the preserve dish.

"Funny," the deacon groaned; "just the opposite. The bees and the beating she gave me made me so sore that I cannot bear anything touching me!"

"Den yer better get inside of a glass case, and go around on a truck," advised Jimmy.

"Will you ever learn common sense," the deacon asked. "But, James, what reason can you assign for Mary Ann's inexplicable assault on me?"

"Off her nut," answered Jimmy, his mouth full of bread and butter.

"What?"

"Got rats on the top floor—gone in her upper story—cracked."

"I suppose that all that vile slang is intended to infer that Mary Ann was a little crazy at the time," the deacon said, with dignity.

"Ke-rect," murmured the unabashed deacon's son. "Jest keep it in yer head, an' my big brother will come around in the morning, and wipe it out with his foot."

"That will do, young man," the deacon remarked, as he rose from the table. "However, when Mary Ann gets back again, we will have a full investigation. The idea of her daring to assault me—me, Deacon Grimes—with a broomstick! It's a good six months in jail."

Jimmy made a vinegar face as the deacon left the room.

"Guess I'll either be away, or put breastworks up in the bosom of my pants about de time dat investigation takes place, or I'll be sorer than the old man," soliloquized he, taking up his hat and going out into the yard.

Pomp was there, with a club in his hand that looked like a young church-steeple.

"Where did you pick up the shot-tower?" inquired Jimmy, gazing at it.

"Tain't a shot-tower, it's a switch," grinned Pomp, showing his teeth until his mouth resembled the entrance to a cemetery. "Guess dat I kin play black-hearted nigger wid blood on his hands, can't I?"

"Guess so," said Jimmy, laughing. "Come along, Jim Crow, and we'll go to Bob's."

To Bob's they soon got, and as nobody was at home except the hired girl—a sworn ally of Bob's—they kicked up a grand old dust till about eight o'clock.

Then the doorbell sounded.

Bob lifted the parlor window curtain and peered out.

"It's the masher," exclaimed he. "Just you fellers bounce into the kitchen till you think that you're needed, and then rush in like blazes."

Then Bob skipped into a bedroom which led out of the parlor, and the girl ushered Mr. Augustus De Fritz Brown in.

Mr. Augustus De Fritz Brown was a sap-headed, round-shouldered, flashily-dressed counter-jumper out on a ten days' vacation in Turnover.

He considered himself simply dizzy, and imagined that every country girl he met was head-over-heels in love with him.

He had only met Bob's sister once—then she had played him for a flat for her own amusement—but he did not know that, but concluded with his usual admirable nerve that she, too, was "mashed."

Therefore he had determined to call upon her—without invitation --and smite her completely.

The hired girl planted him on a chair and left him.

He sat ten minutes, and nobody came.

"Suspect, by Jove, that the little daisy's making her—aw—toilet," reflected he, squirming uneasily around.

A second ten minutes vanished.

"This—aw—is getting to be a deuced bore," remarked he. "Wonder if the creetur who came to the door could have delivered my card?"

But there was nothing in the room except the furniture, and that didn't take the trouble to answer the dandy's question, and he finally gave it up.

Finally, just as he was about to fire off his revolver, or kick out a pane of glass to let folks know that he was there, Bob entered.

Bob's face was expressive of the deepest alarm.

"Heavens!" cried he, in assumed terror, "you here yet?"

"Yaas," drawled Augustus, etc. "Why? Where is Miss Hoyt?"

"Locked up in her room," uttered Bob, "and—listen!"

"Whar is he?" sounded Pomp's voice, "jest youse show him to me, till I paint de ceiling wid his blood."

"If ther wretched fop is here," growled Jimmy, in the deepest bass possible, "I'll cut his ears off, and feed dem to the pigs!"

"Aw, Jove! what the deuce does it all mean?" nervously exclaimed Augustus.

"Mean?" echoed Bob, wishing he had a brass face so that he couldn't laugh; "don't you know—sister's engaged to the Grand Duke of Hoboken—an' dad's swore that he'll murder any man that he catches coming to see her. He's out in the kitchen now, fighting drunk, and he's got a big, black, seven-foot nigger with him."

"Great Gawd! what shall I do?" cried the astounded Augustus.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Bob; "the front door's locked, dad's got the key in his pocket and—"

"I'll chew him up—grind him to pieces," sounded Jimmy's voice, followed by Pomp's squeaking:

"Dis heah club weighs sebenty-ellebben pound, an' if I ever hit dat ar dandy wid it, he'll hab a bad headache."

"A seventy-eleven-pound club," the scared masher groaned; "boy, for God's sake hide me!"

"Let's go in the parlor," came from the kitchen; "if we find the villain there we'll pulverize him," and Jimmy and Pomp made as

much noise as they could tramping around the kitchen, while Bob squinted at Augustus De Fritz Brown's affrighted face, and felt like lying down on the floor and laughing until he burst his suspenders.

But that wouldn't work for beans, for it would give the whole thing away.

So Bob braced right up.

"I might hide you for five dollars," said he.

"I'll give you ten—may I be blanked if I ever go to see a strange girl again without knowing her father," cursed Augustus.

Bang—bang! came Pomp's club against the door.

"Will you hide me?" emphasized the masher, putting a crisp ten in Bob's hand.

"Into that closet," whispered Bob, indicating one; "lay low and don't make a noise, for if dad finds you he'll make cold meat of you."

"Oh, Lord!" uttered the unconscious victim, getting into the closet, and wishing that he was small enough to hide in the key-hole.

Then Jimmy and Pomp burst in.

If they didn't have a combination of Christmas, Fourth of July and Thanksgiving, nobody ever did.

"Where is he?" bawled Jimmy, as he kicked over a chair; "let me lay hands on him till I feed him to the flies."

"Whar am de chicken thief?" echoed Pomp; "fo' de Lawd, I'd gib ten cents to dig him bowels out!" and he gave the floor a whack with the club that made the house shake.

"Do you know where the wretched fool that came to see my darter is?" asked Jimmy of Bob. "Tell me, and I'll kick him to pieces."

"Ain't seen him," replied Bob, slyly exhibiting the ten.

The wicked rascals grinned at one another in glee.

"Regular sponge cake!" murmured Jimmy; then aloud:

"Pomp, I think I hear something in the closet!"

"So do I," responded Pomp, with his club; "if it's the chap dat we am looking fur, I'll knock him up to Hebben through his hat!"

Then they moved toward the closet.

"Bet dat feller's shook his shirt off!" whispered Jimmy, his face all one big laugh.

"Sweat him shoes full ob fear-drops," snickered Pomp.

"Better dust, and gib him a show to clear out," advised Bob, in a low tone.

"Pears to me I heah somebody in de oder room," shouted Pomp, catching his cue.

"Sure enough," answered Jimmy, and then the two scudded into the bedroom, upsetting everything they could in the way, and when they got fairly out of sight, they laid down and laughed till they thought that their teeth would drop out.

Then Bob opened the closet door. Crouched away up in one corner was Augustus De Fritz Brown, looking as if he had met two or three thousand Indians, and a whole family of grizzly bears.

"Are they gone?" he gasped, with faltering lips.

"Yes, fly for your life!" advised Bob.

Augustus needed no second warning. He put out of the house by way of the window, as if a tiger was playing tag with him, and went down the walk in a way which was not slow.

At the gate he met Bob's father.

The old rooster had his mind full of tramps and robbers, and he made a dive for Mr. Brown's coat collar.

But Augustus was nerved to desperation, and he let the old man have a crack in the jaw that astonished him.

"Take that, you blasted old fool, and get out of the way!" growled he, as he vaulted over the fence and made a bee-line for the hotel, resolved to take the first train home.

And, ten minutes later, when old Hoyt bounced into the kitchen where Jimmy, Pomp and Bob were sitting talking about the picnic they would have with that ten dollars, and breathlessly remarked that he had been attacked by seventeen masked robbers at the gate, Jimmy gently winked at the ceiling, and murmured:

"What d'yer say?"

CHAPTER X.

Jimmy remained in Buffers' grocery store for quite awhile, and proved himself to be a solid little business man, much to the deacon's inward delight, for after all the old man was proud of his adopted son, notwithstanding the latter's born mischievousness.

Buffers, too, thought a good deal of the lad, although Jimmy used to worry him awfully in some ways, of course; a country store is a great hanging out place for all the loafers around, and Buffers' was no exception to the rule.

Every night a gang would congregate, discuss politics, paint the floor with tobacco juice, tell fish stories and otherwise amuse themselves.

But the boss liar; the one with the cast-iron cheek, was an old windbag named Bill Potter, and the stories that he related, all about himself, were enough to scare a stone image into fits.

One night he dropped into the store as a lively conversation was going on about tramps.

"I'll be hanged if I ain't afraid of them," said old Buffers, as he juggled with a quart of salt and a brown paper bag, "they're too daring for anything. Why, they broke in Squire Peabody's the other evening and stole the refrigerator and all the plated spoons."

"Yes," corroborated a farmer, "they burnt Elder Jones' barn down because he wouldn't give them silver forks with ham sandwiches."

"Oh, they're awful," groaned a venerable chap on a mackerel barrel; "three big tramps stopped a man on the turnpike last night, and threatened to jam his hat down his throat if he didn't hand over all his money."

"Yes," interrupted Jimmy, sober as an owl, "one big feller with a gumboil on his nose stopped me yesterday afternoon, an' wanted ter scoop in my diamond pin."

Bill Potter gave a snort of defiance and cleared his throat.

Jimmy noticed the action and nudged Bob, who was roosting on the counter before him.

"Wait till yer hear the horse-chestnut," he whispered: "Bill's a going ter spread the taffy on with a snow shovel."

Sure enough, Bill calmly elevated himself on a cracker box, and began:

"This here being afraid of tramps is all stuff," uttered he.

"It ain't," contradicted Buffers.

Bill gazed upon him with a pitying smile.

"Do I look as if I was afraid of tramps?" asked he.

"Yes," Jimmy promptly responded, "you look as if you'd fall to pieces if you saw one's sister."

"Small boys should be seen—never heard," rebuked Bill; "gentlemen, maybe you won't believe it, but last Saturday night I met sixteen men in front of my door—tramps, every one of them."

"Did they molest you?" inquired somebody.

"Molest me? you bet, sir. The whole sixteen jumped on me at once, chucked me down in the road, danced on me and wanted my valuables. Did I weaken? no, sir. I just took a chew of tobacco, gritted my teeth and braced right up. And, gentlemen, I hope I may die if I didn't lay every blessed tramp dead on the ground with his brains resting in his own gore."

"What became o' the stiff?" asked Jimmy.

"The what?" returned Potter, mystified for a moment.

"The bodies, stupid. You wouldn't tumble if the moon dropped on you."

"Oh," replied Bill, scratching his chin for inspiration, "I forgot to say that there were twenty-four more tramps hid in the bushes, and doubtless they carried the remains of their dead chums away."

"What a whopper!" exclaimed Jimmy; "dat's grease on a paper collar, sure."

Bill Potter got down off the cracker-box in a hurry.

"Mr. Buffers," appealed he, "do you allow that young imp to insult me with impunity—me, a man who fit with Washington, saved Lafayette's life, was a bosom friend of Chris Columbus?"

"Chris Columbus?" Jimmy repeated, "that's true, ain't it? S'pose dat yer skipped the tra-la-loo with Adam, and made love to Eve, didn't you? Get out, you old story-teller."

"Story-teller, hey?" dignifiedly remarked Potter, buttoning up his coat. "Young man, nothing but your age restrains me from embedding my boot amongst the rear of your flannels. I do not allow folks to insult me, sir. When in Mexico with the Duke of Wellington, I one evening struck a seven-foot greaser dead with my fist, for telling me that my clothes didn't fit me."

"Oh, go 'way," said Jimmy, leaning confidentially over the counter, "do you think that I've just landed and haven't got the green out of my eye yet? Nixey; I'm horse-fly, I am."

"That'll do," threatened the angry William; "a little more, my fresh lad, and there will be a small grave in your family burying-ground."

"Come, Potter, that will never do," Buffers interrupted, "don't you see that you are interrupting business?"

"Interrupting blazes! Can't a man come in this grocery store if he wants to?"

"Certainly, if he don't lie too much."

Potter looked like a ten-cent chromo of indignation.

"Very well," muttered he, "you too, Buffers. This is the way the last man who left Fort Sumpter is looked upon by his fellow beings. I shall withdraw my custom elsewhere."

"Pound of sunlight and a tootpick every week," Jimmy put in sotto voce.

But Potter did not deign to notice him.

He swept out of the store as if he owned all New England and two or three counties in Europe.

"Jimmy," rebuked Buffers, "you should treat Mr. Potter with more respect."

"So I will, if he'll only give us a rest with his ghost stories. Hear him talk about his courage. Why, his muscle couldn't hold a katydid, and he'd drop dead if he even saw a man with a pistol," responded Jimmy, doing up three quarts of dried prunes in a three quart bag with professional dexterity, and politely telling the pretty girl who wanted them, that he knew a fellow that was so gone on her that he'd sit for hours on the back fence throwing kisses to her calico dress drying on the clothes-line.

Buffer grinned to himself, and Jimmy slyly chuckled:

"If me an' the boss ain't solid, yer can shoot me with a muffin."

But that night, before he went home, an idea came into his head.

And bright and early the next morning he unfolded it to Bob.

"Do you want to have more fun than we had out of that mash-er?" asked he.

"You bet," said Bob.

"Dis nigger up for it," assured Pomp; "ki, massa Jimmy, I've had mo' fun since you've come heah den I ever did afore in my life."

"I ain't a young prayer-meeting, or a half-bound tract," Jimmy acknowledged with a grin. "But, fellers, this is a dizzy hurrah."

"Spit it, rat," said Bob, who was fast changing from a somewhat stale country boy into a fresh young rooster.

"Of course you know what a brass-mouthed liar Bill Potter is?" said Jimmy.

Pomp threw up his hands in regular camp-meeting style.

"Fo' de Lawd," said he, "if dat ar man had been livin' in de good ole Scripter times dey would hab buried him in de same grave with Ananias, shuah."

"Well," Jimmy continued, "he was around to the store last night blowing like a whale about a fight that he had with fairy tramps; how he laid dem out, an' all sich stuff."

"He couldn't lick a cock-eyed baby with no arms," growled Bob.

"Just so. Now what I want to do is to give him a good scare. We'll disguise ourselves like tramps and frighten him out of his undershirt."

"Golly," laughed Pomp. "I'll be dog-gorned if I'll know myself bime-by. T'other night I wuz a bad, black-hearted culled man wif blood in him eye, an' now I is to be a tramp, praise de Lamb!"

"When shall we work the racket?" inquired Bob. "I'll dress Pomp up, Jimmy."

"You will."

"I should smile. Give him dad's ulster, a big hat, a false nose, tie a towel around his mouth and I'll bet that his own mother wouldn't know him if she met him carrying a calcium light. How's that?"

"Tip-top; be on hand at Pomp's house at eight," and Jimmy went off to the store, as joyful as if he had just given away his shoes to a poor blind beggar with bunions on his toes.

Business was brisk that day, and he did not reach Pomp's till very near eight.

He found Bob already there.

That good little boy and Pomp were ahead, disguised—so much so, that they were enough to scare a corpse into life.

"Thought dat youse warn't comin'," said Pomp, parading around in his awe-inspiring rig.

"So did I," said Bob, struggling with a pair of boots that were big enough to hide a ship in.

"Cheese it, culls—pull down yer vest!" sounded a deep bass voice. Jimmy started.

"You didn't give it away to any one else, did you?" he anxiously inquired.

"Laws, no," responded Pomp, "dat's only my parrot. You 'member him, don't youse, boy? He's de feathered debble dat raised de row in the cullard church."

"I bet I do," responded Jimmy, laughing heartily at the recollection of his first hurrah in Turnover. "By the way, boys, we've struck it soft. Bill Potter is going to call on Widder Smite—he's courting her, you know, and he won't get home till late. Won't we give him a gaudy old scare?"

Then he left his companions in crime. But in ten minutes time he reappeared.

He, too, was disguised.

He had on the deacon's coat, which tickled his heels. The deacon's second best high hat, and an immense stable syringe.

"What are you going to do with that?" asked Bob.

"Give it up," cheerfully answered Jimmy; "guess it will come useful, though—some way or other," and he shoved the article in his coat-tail pocket.

For about an hour the boys loafed around, telling stories, singing songs and guying one another, till their sides ached with laughter.

Finally Pomp looked at the clock.

"Nine o'clock," said he, "guess dat we'd better be goin'."

"All right," Jimmy remarked, "turn down the lamp and we'll git."

He headed the procession and opened the door. A chill wind rushed in and some rain drops spattered in his face.

"By gum, it's raining!" cried he.

"Is we sugar?" inquired Pomp; "reckon dat de rain won't hurt us. Kain't we hide in Bill Potter's barn an' lay for him dere?"

"Sure enough," said Jimmy; "come along, boy."

"They all do it," croaked the parrot.

"You're right," laughed Bob; "here's a Christmas present for you, old baldhead," and he flung a boot which knocked Devil, the parrot, under the bed, where he lay for an hour or so, swearing all the cuss-words that he ever heard.

By the time the boys had reached Potter's barn it was raining blue blazes.

"Old Bill ain't home yet," said Bob, glancing up at the darkened house on the other side of the road, for the champion liar of Turnover was a bachelor.

"Then we'll snatch him bald-headed right in front of his own door," said Jimmy. "Unbutton your ears for a second, boys; I think I hear footsteps."

The boys did as requested, and Pomp bent his organ of hearing to the ground.

"Dat's him," softly he uttered; "dat's Bill; I kin tell dem ar flat-boats ob his a mile off. His shoes am so big dat when de circus comes to town, instead of making a ring dey put up dere tent on one ob Bill's heel-prints."

Then hide," commanded Jimmy.

In a minute the boys were in cover, and everything was as quiet as a chicken-roost with no chickens in it.

Meanwhile, old Bill Potter was tramping along through the mud and the rain like a small army.

"Darn such a nasty night! making love to the widder don't pay up for the plaguy walk home," he growled; "besides, this is just a night for dark and bloody deeds. Bless me, if Pat Carey wasn't stabbed just such a night as this!" and he shivered as he noticed the darkness around him.

For Bill Potter, like most of those confirmed braggarts, was at heart as timid as a mouse.

Plunging along over the slippery ground, he at last reached his garden gate.

His hand was on the latch; in another moment he would have been within his own premises, when something happened.

It was nothing more than his confront by three outlandish forms.

"Whoa, dar!" sternly uttered the first man, Pomp, of course; "just youse move another step, sah, an' youse am a dead man," and he flourished his big club threateningly.

"Dat's so," confirmed Jimmy, pointing the syringe at Potter; "just you keep still, or I'll put so many bullet-holes in you that folks can see to read a newspaper through you."

Potter saw the syringe, and thought as sure as pancakes that it was a pistol.

"Oh, for God's sake, don't shoot!" implored he, sinking down upon his knees. "Who are you?"

"Tramps!" thundered Jimmy; "did you hear of the bloody tramps dat killed six men, choked a woman, an' boiled a pair of twins, down to Cranberryville?"

"Ye-es," stuttered Potter, lying as usual.

"Well, we are those tramps. Come, hand over everything that you've got, or we'll tear your lungs out!"

"Be lively," added Bob, "and we'll let you go with only cutting your throat."

"Oh, Heaven!" groaned the wretched victim; "why, I'll get killed anyhow. If my old friend Shender was only here. Help—murder!"

Pomp's flat hand came like a small cellar-door across the shouter's mouth.

"Dat'll do," advised Pomp; "just youse button up youse mouf an' gib youse tongue a holiday. You keep on wif dat concert an' dere'll be anoder debbil a-sitting aroun' de fire afore night."

"Oh, I'll be still," Potter pleaded; "gentlemen, kind, good, benevolent gentlemen, what do you want of me?"

"Your money or your life," Jimmy thundered.

"Yes, that's it," chimed in Bob; "shekels or gore."

"I hain't got much," Potter whined, handing out an old brass key and a trunk check; "gentlemen, d—don't rob me. I've got six children."

"Another whopper," said Jimmy, aside, and then aloud:

"Out with your money, or I'll slice your nose off!"

"What blood-thirsty wretches!" moaned the miserable Potter. "I believe that they would just as lief eat me as not."

With which comfortable reflection he went on a fishing excursion in his pants pockets.

"Here," cried he, holding out a few small bills; "now, lemme go, please."

No wonder he wanted to be let go.

The boys had got him down on his knees in a mud puddle; the

rain was giving his back a free washing and he wasn't having what is generally called a good time at all.

But the boys were enjoying a sort of little New Year all by themselves, and they determined to keep it up, for they were so thickly dressed that the rain did not bother them worth a cent.

"Hand me your watch," commanded Bob, looking fierce enough to eat up a regiment of cavalry.

Potter tremblingly produced a small clock, called by courtesy a watch, which was never known to go except when he did.

"Queen Victoria sent it to my mother," declared he, sighing heavily as Pomp grabbed it.

"Shall we let him go now?" whispered Bob.

Jimmy's eyes sparkled with mischief.

"Not yet; I'm going to give him a good dose," he replied.

Then, taking the recumbent Potter by the shoulder, he remarked:

"That's a nice coat you're a tremblin' in."

"M—made for the p—president," Potter stammered, totally unable to tell the truth if his life depended upon it.

"Guess I'd be a regular masher in it," Jimmy carelessly reflected; "bounce out of it."

"But I'll catch cold."

"What in thunder do I care? Off with it."

Off it came, and then Pomp noticed the shirt beneath.

"I say, sah," said he, raising his sewer-pipe of a club above Potter's head, "gimme dat shirt of yours."

"I've got the—the consumption," declared Potter.

"If youse don't want to see how you'd look wifout any head, youse better gimme dat shirt," Pomp counseled.

"Take it, you goldarned nasty nigger!" yelled Potter, forgetting prudence in his anger.

Whack! came Pomp's club across his shoulder.

"Ise a church-member, sah, an' I sets my face against swearing, bress de Lamb!" piously said Pomp.

"Church-member—you!" exclaimed Potter. "Oh, Lord! what next?"

He found out soon enough.

Right at the corner of his barn a big hogshead stood under the water-spout, to catch whatever water fell on the barn, for in most parts of New England rain water is in great demand for washing purposes, it being softer, and supposed to possess more cleaning qualities than well or spring water.

"Let's put him in the hogshead and give him a bath," proposed Bob.

"That's so, he needs washing," corroborated Jimmy.

"Please don't," Potter entreated, groveling around like a whipped spaniel. "I'm the cleanest man in America. I wash eleven times a day—Grant will tell you so."

"We'll baptize him," chuckled Pomp; "ketch a hold, chillun!"

The "chillun" did catch a hold, and lifted the luckless liar up, he screaming all the while as if he was killed.

"Dump him in," ordered Jimmy.

Splash he went into the hogshead, which was about half-full of cold water.

"Oh, murder!" he howled, as the icy stream from the spout dashed on his head, "I'm being killed."

"Shut up," cried Jimmy, squirting a syringe-full of water on him.

"Don't wake de baby," grinned Pomp, parting Potter's hair with an old rake that he had picked up.

But just then Bob interrupted.

"Hark!" said he, "I hear a wagon."

Pomp and Jimmy both listened.

Sure enough the sound of wheels was plainly distinguishable.

"Dis heah nigger's a gwine," said Pomp; "guess dat it wouldn't agree wid my health to be cotched foolin' round heah."

"All right," answered Jimmy; "good-by, old man," and he gave the hogshead a push that tipped it over, and sent Potter ker-slam into the muddy road, scooting away a moment later as if he had wings on his feet. Bob and Pomp having already skedaddled.

Bill Potter had hardly got to his feet when the wagon rolled up.

In it was Deacon Grimes, who had been off somewhere on a little picnic of his own.

"Great ham-bones!" cried he, dimly perceiving Potter, who was dancing up and down as if he went by clockwork, and swearing in every known language, "what does this mean?"

"Mean?" echoed Potter. "It means that I've been attacked by at least twelve dozen tramps, all armed to the teeth."

"Twelve dozen tramps!" the deacon repeated, in consternation.

"Yes," wailed Potter, "and they near killed me. I made a brave resistance, but they overpowered me."

"Your clothes?" asked the deacon, modestly blushing at the other's skin toilet.

"Eight big niggers robbed me of them," the truthful Potter related. "Won't you get down, deacon, and help me into the house?"

The deacon complied, left his horse standing, and assisted Potter along.

On the way the deacon's foot struck against something, and he just nipped a cuss-word in time.

"It's very careless of you to leave a cobblestone in the path," complained he.

Potter bent down and grabbed the struck-against article.

"It's my watch!" shouted he; "thank goodness."

But the deacon did not re-echo the prayer.

"Any fool that carries such a watch as that deserves to be robbed," was his inward thought, as he remembered his pet corn.

There were more surprises in store for Potter.

Before he reached the house he found everything that had been taken away from him hung up on the walls.

"Queer tramps," remarked the deacon.

Potter himself began to smell a mouse, especially as his money and valuables were intact and unmolested.

"Pears to me I recognized the voices of them 'ere tramps," said he, nodding his head sagaciously; "where was your Jimmy to-night?"

The deacon smiled a pitying smile, and rubbed his hands as only pleased deacons can.

"Don't accuse that boy," he said.

"Why?"

"Because, just before supper, he told me that he was going to spend the evening with an infidel old soldier who was on a sick bed. Bless me, I can see the lad now sitting alongside of the veteran's war-scarred form reading to him in earnest tones my last tract. Ah, James is improving vastly. Some of his original sin still remains, but I hope before long that he will drop into my views and fit himself for the missionary field."

What would the deacon have said if he could have seen his hopeful son just then?

Around the tables in Pomp's the boys were seated, playing penny-ante, occasionally refreshing themselves from a foaming cider jug.

They all felt good, and Jimmy remarked, as he scooped in a pot on three kings:

"Dat was a corker of mine about the wooden-legged sojer, wasn't it? The old man swallowed it whole."

And Devil, the parrot, crawling out from under the bed, diabolically remarked:

"Ain't we had a deuced of a time?"

CHAPTER XI.

The next morning after the racket old Bill Potter came down to Buffers' store with one of the most miraculous fairy tales ever invented by a mortal.

According to his accounts he had been attacked by at least six thousand gory-handed tramps, and he had only succumbed after having built a fence of corpses 'way across the road.

Jimmy stood it as long as he could—listened to the old man's bald-headed lies with exemplary patience, and didn't say a word until Potter, warming up to his work, described one of his assailants as eight foot tall.

Then Jimmy's patience gave way.

The joke was too good; it could not be wondered at that he felt like giving it away.

"Mr. Potter," said he, looking like an angel with a dirty face and invisible wings, "were the ferocious tramps dat tackled you all men?"

The veracious Potter turned and gave him a glance of ineffable disdain.

"Of course they was," he said; "there wasn't one of them that could have weighed less than two hundred."

Jimmy quietly smiled and pulled out from his pocket a dilapidated snuff-box, that looked as if it had been caressed by a pile-driver.

"Is that yours?" asked he.

Bill Potter's face seemed to have been struck by a cramp of surprise.

"W—where did you get that?" stammered he; "that was one of the things that the desperate land-buccaneers took from me last night."

Jimmy winked a quiet wink, and hauled out from another pocket a greasy, time-spotted necktie.

"Dat ain't Dom Pedro's, is it?" he inquired.

"No," gasped Potter; "King Calico gave that to me for saving his third wife's life. She was choking on an oyster cracker, and I welshed her on the back in the nick of time with a snow shovel. That ere cracker popped out of her mouth with so much force that it put the eye out of a nigger who stood ten feet away. Those ere blood-stained tramps took that, too. How in the almighty bean-pot did you come by it?"

"Gentlemen," said Jimmy, turning to the usual gang, who were holding down the barrels and boxes in the store, "you've heard all that Bill has been giving us about his fishy adventures last night?"

"Yes," chorused the crowd.

"Well, it's all soapsuds—moonlight on a piller-case."

The gang gazed at each other in total bewilderment, and then stared suspiciously at Potter, who, in turn, looked at Jimmy as if he was a spotted leopard boy, or some other equally astonishing freak of nature.

"What do you say?" finally he shouted.

"I say," Jimmy rejoined, "that all the tramps you met last night were Bob, and me, and Pomp."

"Dat am so, swar to God!" Pomp corroborated, from his post in the doorway, for the day being rainy, he, too, was enjoying a loafing spell.

Potter began to feel shaky, and looked as if he expected the clouds to fall down, in company with the rain.

"I don't understand," said he.

"Then here it is, plain as the president's proclamation," said Jimmy; and he up and told the whole story.

If there wasn't the biggest old laugh followed that ever shook the rafters of that store, this author will lend you ten dollars on demand.

"Ho—ho—ho!" roared Buffers, his fat sides shaking with mirth. "Bill Potter—a man that has a graveyard to bury his dead men in every town, so he says—to be scared, and robbed, and shook out of his clothes by two boys and a nigger! Well, it's the best joke I ever heard!"

But Potter didn't think so.

"Gol darn it!" roared he, "I'll have you arrested, you confounded little imp!" and he made a wild dive at Jimmy with a broom.

Jimmy, though, parried the blow with the sugarscoop, and calmly remarked:

"Nixey, Jim, this ere little rooster's got too much perlitical influenza to git scooped in by the cops. Jest chalk that down on your collar, Charley Ross!"

"I'll dig your bowels out!" Potter declared, maddened by the laughter of the spectators.

"Put on a rubber overcoat, so dat you won't get wet doing it," advised Jimmy, in high glee.

"See if I don't, you miserable, small fiend!" Potter averred, snatching up an ax-handle, and going on a hunting expedition for Jimmy's scalp.

Then they had a lively game of tag for about ten minutes, until the store looked as if an escaped lion had been prowling around it.

By and by Buffers thought that he would take a hand in it.

"See here," cried he, catching Potter by the throat just as he was about combing Jimmy's hair with his foot, "you've got to stop this."

"I'll be hanged if I do," replied old Bill, thoroughly aroused. "Leave go of me, you cheating sugar-sander, or I'll knock the ear off you!"

"You will, will you?" Buffers remarked, and with that he picked up the champion liar and threw him head over heels out of the store. "I ain't a baby just yet."

Potter picked himself up, and after seeing that he was all there, at first thought of going back again and filling that store up with dead bodies, and deluging the floor with gore.

But on second thought he concluded not to go, and limped off, vowing sulphurous retribution upon Jimmy and Buffers.

"I'll fix them," murmured he; "the idea of them playing jokes on me, Bill Potter, the first man to discover California, and the only man who knows who struck Billy Patterson. Oh, the idiots. I will make them sea-sick." And he felt so mad that it did his heart good to see an unprotected female slip on a melon-rind, and get mud all over her white petticoat.

As for Jimmy, he felt happy the rest of the day, and sang "Since James put on High Collars," so sweetly around the shop, as he did his daily work, that several men dropped in with shotguns and wanted to measure him for a coffin.

Toward night it cleared up, and he, with Bob and Pomp, went to see the train come in.

Those of you who live in our great cities don't know what a great event the coming of the evening train—perhaps the only one during the day—is to the inhabitants of a small country town like Turnover.

Why, it is as much to them as a parade of the first division, a big fire in the Bowery and two or three murders, combined, would be to New York lads.

Generally, all unemployed men go down to the depot an hour before train time, wait till the cars arrive, and then criticise everybody and everything that gets out.

That evening, the most conspicuous passenger to alight was an "Archie-Dear" specimen of a young man.

Ah, he was a daisy.

You could see it in his dizzy hat, and his gaudy watch chain, and the gallus way in which he twirled his ten-cent cane.

"Young fellah," said he to Jimmy, "can you diweet me to a table d'hote?"

"A what?" exclaimed Jimmy, really surprised.

"A table d'hote."

"Does it come in packages?"

"What howwid stupidity. I mean can you show me a restaurant?"

"Oh, hash-house! Course I can; just you slide after me and I'll bounce you into a grub-mill quick as oiled thunder."

The dandy put his glass—he had a birdie eye-glass—up to his eye, and followed Jimmy, who steered him into the hotel—the only one that the village boasted of.

"Thanks," said the fop, and without giving Jimmy a blessed cent he vanished up the stairway.

"Dat ere chap's too sweet to live," reflected Jimmy, as he peered into his empty hand; "dey ought to put him in corsets and bang his hair down over his eyes; plant a tin sign with 'Baby' on his stomach, and let him breathe through a wire screen for fear dat a fly might get up his nose. Next time dat I shows him anywhere I wants cash down fust."

Then Jimmy started for home, convinced that he hadn't made much out of that speculation, but resolved to get square on the fresh young man just as he had settled accounts with Charles Augustus Fritz Brown.

He soon had a chance to.

The new animal, Archibald something, or rather, Toodles, was of the same stripe as Brown, that is to say, he considered himself as an A 1 highest-price masher.

Jimmy noticed this failing, and as Toodles seemed to have made up his mind to stay at Turnover for an indefinite period, he determined to work a quiet little job on him.

Jimmy said he did it for fun.

Well, maybe he did, but I guess on the whole the deacon's son was slightly jealous of the brainless Toodles, on account of the latter making up to Ella Haines, whom Jimmy considered to be his own private property, and who, like most country girls, was not at all indifferent to the attentions of a well-dressed "city-chap."

So Jimmy made up his mind to give Toodles a specimen take-in.

Accordingly, he unfolded his idea on the subject to his faithful friends and companions in sin and misery, Pomp and Bob.

"Fellers," inquired he, as if the idea had suddenly overpowered him, "what kind of a looking girl do you think I'd make?"

"Ki," laughed Pomp, "you'd be de wust looking gal dat eber dere was. Sho, chil, you couldn't make a nigger wench, luff alone a white gal."

"Don't know about that," Jimmy answered, with a shake of his head; "reckon dat if I had been changed fer a gal kid when I wuz young I think dat I'd had all the lads on a hay rope."

"Nice walk you've got for a girl," said Bob, as Jimmy pranced off in imitation of some girl he had seen.

"Looks fo' all de world like a chicken wid de colic," supplemented Pomp.

"Be the Heavens, Guage, if you insult me, I shall chastise thee with an eye-lash," Jimmy mimicked, as much like a girl as possible.

Then he asked, in his natural voice.

"Do you think, fellers, dat if I war togged out in a long dress, an' a bouncin' old pull-back, an' powder an' paint galore all over my face, that anybody would take me for a girl?"

"Dunno, child," answered Pomp, sagely agitating his woolly cranium; "whyfore?"

"The whyfore is that I want to play a daisy for about half an hour, an' make another city masher sick."

"Who?"

"Dat spring-bottomed Charley with the double-decked piccadiller dat's hanging out at the hotel."

"Mistah Toodles?"

"That's the partridge. You know he thinks he's heavy on the mash."

"Took my Dinah fo' white folk, an' followed her de other ebening," laughed Pomp; "but she jess up an' give him a belt with her leetle gaiter dat gib him de stomach ache in him teeth. Dinah am a honey, chile, ebery time!"

"Well," explained Jimmy, "I'm going in and make love to Mary Ann; tell her that she's so sweet dat the flies all light on her; borrow her fixins, an' come out the gallusest daisy you ever saw."

"Gwine to do it now?"

"No, to-morrow; goin' ter send him a love letter to-night, telling him to meet me. Da-da, boys. I've got to skip down to the store and help Buffers chuck burnt peas in the coffee."

Away went the young rascal, blithe as a sparrow, while Pomp remarked, gazing after him:

"Dat chile's full of de debbil; but his heart am in de right place. Just you heah dat, Bob Hoyt."

That night Jimmy composed and posted to Toodles the sickest love letter that ever passed through Turnover post-office.

He signed it Sadie St. Clair, and concluded by asking Toodles to meet the writer, described as a young girl who had fallen dead in love with him, at five o'clock the next afternoon, at a certain spot on the turnpike, somewhat noted as a trysting place for the village lads and lasses.

Toodles got the letter first thing in the morning, and it nearly tickled him out of his boots.

"Another rustic beauty smitten," he soliloquized, admiring himself in the looking-glass; "'pon honor, I'm sorry for her. But, really, I must keep the appointment. Sadie St. Clair—what a romantic name," and he spent the entire forenoon getting himself up regardless.

Jimmy got off from the store at three, pleading a most terrific headache, and got to Pomp's little house, the headquarters of all his deviltry, about four.

True to his word, he had coaxed Mary Ann out of the necessary paraphernalia of a female toilet, and what was better, she had volunteered to rig him out.

When Jimmy arrived at Pomp's, he found her already there.

Taking off his coat, vest and collar, he climbed into the dress, etc., and in a few moments stood before his admiring friends, a girl to all outward appearance.

"Shure it's a pretty colleen that you make," said Mary Ann, standing off and admiring him; "just hould yer head to wan side, an' stop walking like a giraffe, and no wan will ever know that yees wasn't born to petticoats."

"Oh, tickle me under the chin," grinned Jimmy, sweeping up and down the room; "who wants to marry me—I'm the boss girl, culls."

"Go 'way wid yer foolin' and behave yerself loike a lady," Mary Ann advised; "if yer talk that way the feller will foind yer out, shure."

"How's this?" inquired Jimmy. "Charles Adolphus, if you dare to sit on the same sofa with me I will kick your ear off!"

Mary Ann laughed, and after a few more directions left, going back to wrestle with the supper things.

"I'd like to come and see you fool the chap, Jimmy," said she; "but if the deacon's supper was late ten minutes, it's me walking papers dat I'd be afther receiving."

By and by it grew time for Jimmy to keep his engagement.

Down the road he went arm in arm with Pomp and Bob, and not a few persons wondered, as they passed the trio, at such a nice-looking girl being so familiar with a negro.

Toodles was already at the appointed spot as they drew near.

He had been there nearly an hour, and was getting rather tired of inspecting the road.

At a bend in the road Jimmy left his friends.

"Hide in the bushes," were his last instructions, "and you can take the whole thing in."

Then he put on as modest a look as he could—it was hard work, for Jimmy wasn't anything extraordinary on modesty—and hove in sight of Toodles.

That lady-killer spied him in a twinkling.

In a second his hat was down to his knees and he himself by Jimmy's side.

"Beautiful afternoon, miss," said he; "the air is balmy and the bees are making honey, the birds building their nests, the—"

"Bullfrogs making hops, and the caterpillars making cats, and the grasshoppers making hops," finished up Jimmy, serene as a cloudless sky.

Toodles gazed at him in astonishment.

"Wondah, by Jove, if she's crazy?" he mentally asked himself. Then aloud:

"Will you accept my arm?"

"Don't mention it, rocks," came Jimmy's unexpected response, as he fastened himself to Toodle's right wing. "Bully weather for fish-worms, ain't it?"

"Toodle's face was a study.

"Bully weather for fish-worms!" he unconsciously ejaculated; "the girl's out of her head."

Jimmy perceived that he was putting it on a little too thick, and hastened to remedy his inadvertence.

"You must excuse yourself, sir," he softly lisped, "if I am rough in my chin-music, because I have a twin brother who's nuts on slang."

"Oh, certainly," rejoined Toodles, thanking fate that he wasn't acquainted with any more of her family; "shall we take a little walk?"

"Yes, don't mind if I do—I'm willing to pad the hoof for a little while."

Toodle's jaws dropped about two feet, but he braced up and began to talk to Jimmy.

"Sadie St. Clair is a pretty name," affirmed he, with a tender glance meant to be awfully killing.

"You bet," said Jimmy; "but that ain't my real name."

"What?"

"Sadie St. Clair ain't my real name."

"It isn't?"

"Lord, no—my name's Mary Ann McGovern, but I thought that Sadie would sound better, so I just put it down at the end of the letter."

Toodles felt as if he wanted to go home and club himself right away.

He, the darling of the high-toned city belles, tramping down a dusty road with a girl by the name of Mary Ann McGovern, who talked like a Five Points gamin, and walked gimp-legged. Why, the idea was simply preposterous—the reality more so.

Jimmy, though, knew his business, and steered Toodles straight for the village proper, where all the stores were.

"I'm death on ice cream, mister," casually lisped he, as he and his escort paused in front of the confectionery.

Toodles tumbled; he could not help doing so, and politely asked:

"Would you like some?"

"My stomach's just aching for it," was the ready answer; "let's waltz in."

They waltzed, and Toodles ordered the usual spoony mixture—vanilla and strawberry mixed.

Jimmy got through with his plate in three winks of a fly's eye, and ordered a second.

But even then he wanted more, and put plate after plate of cream away until Toodles stared at him with distended eyes and muttered:

"My God, she'll bust."

But she didn't.

She gazed at the wreck of the eight plates with a sigh, and said:

"If I wasn't chuck full up to the throat I'd chaw up some more, but I can't."

"Thank goodness," mentally ejaculated Toodles, paying the bill, and wishing he could give his fair companion the dead shake.

She wouldn't be shook, though. She held on to him like a porous plaster, and by and by he concluded to make the best of a bad job.

Thought he:

"She is really mashed, and I might as well humor the little thing. I do wish, though, that she'd hoed out her ears before she come out!"

So in a sugary tone he observed:

"Do you believe in love, daisy?"

"What's that?"

"It's the commingling of kindred hearts, the binding together of reciprocal souls, the——"

"Oh, go 'way," interrupted the supposed Mary Ann; "what are you giving me, Terry—glue! That's an awful pretty ring you've got on your finger."

"Yaas."

"It would look awfully nice on my finger."

Toodles groaned.

He saw through his companion's transparent game in a jiffy, but he could not help himself.

"Take it," sighed he, forcing over the coveted amethyst.

"Oh, thank you," said Jimmy, putting it on his stubby finger; "you're darned good company, you are."

"So are you," gallantly Toodles responded; "you must have a lover, dearest?"

"No."

"How is that?"

"The last duffer that kept company with me tried to put his arm around my waist, and I split his head open with an ax," replied Jimmy, munching on some caramels which he had struck Toodles for. But encouragingly—"you ain't like him—he had buckteeth and a bare lip."

"I should think not; but, little one, don't you think you could grow to love me?"

Jimmy bit the fringe on his sleeves bashfully.

"Im an awfully shy young hen," murmured he, twisting about like a bashful young girl.

Encouraged by her actions and words, Toodles stole his arm around the girl's waist, and tried to kiss her.

"Nixey," cried Jimmy, suddenly planting a blow on Toodles face; "I ain't that kind of a girl."

Toodles staggered back aghast, and for the first time observed Jimmy's pantaloons, which had dodged the cords, which held them tied above his knees, and were now dangling down below his dress.

"It's a boy, by Jove!" yelled he, and without another word he dashed down the road, past Pomp and Bob, who had emerged from the bushes just in time to see the fun.

Jimmy laughed until his sides ached, and related the whole racket to his chums, who joined in his merriment.

"But fust wash de back of youse neck, honey," advised Pomp; "anybody would tink dat youse was changing into a nigger."

CHAPTER XII.

Jimmy was immensely flattered at the success of his joke, and for several days strutted around like a young bantam; but a thing soon happened which made him feel a little less hilarious.

You remember, doubtless, the joke which Jimmy played on that champion liar, the man with the cast-iron cheek, old Bill Potter, and the unceremonious bouncing which that modern Munchausen got at Buffer's store the next morning?

That joke rankled in Bill's heart, it ruffled his gizzard, and at last he swore a regular dime novel oath to get square on the boys.

And he did it.

The first thing that Jimmy knew of the old fellow's purpose was one night, on his way home from the store, when he was suddenly stopped by Pomp.

Pomp looked sick.

He looked as if he had been sucked through a steam pump and hit on the head with a trip-hammer, and then used by a couple of giants as a football.

His face was as white as a ducky's can be; his hands shook as if palsied, and almost any one would have imagined that he had met a whole graveyard full of ghosts.

Jimmy gazed at him in surprise.

"Playin' nigger scare-crow?" said he.

Pomp shook his head.

"Oh!" moaned he, "I'se a gone nigger; dey'll gib me fifty-leben years, shuah. Tink of dis bressed lamb, wid him head shaved, and de curlin'-irons round him wrists. Oh, Massa Jimmy, why did youse lead me astray?"

"Singing me a hymn, ain't you?" inquired Jimmy, who didn't have the tail end of an idea about what Pomp was speaking.

"No, sah; I'se playin' my harp trutefully. State Prison fo' de hull gang, an' hang me kase I'se cullid. Oh, Lawd! why ain't dis chile at de bottom ob de Red Sea?"

Jimmy grew more mystified, and felt half inclined to think that Pomp had gone on a little hurrah of his own, and got sentimentally drunk.

"See here, Pomp," said he, catching the shaking coon by the shoulders, "what are you playing on me—gum-games?"

"Hush!" entreated Pomp, letting his voice ramble somewhere into his stomach; "doan't youse go home!"

"Don't go home?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Kase, child, youse'll get arrested and stuck into de jail, wid nuffin' ter eat but bread an' water, an nobody to talk to but de cockroaches."

"Why will I?"

"Dat scrump-bellied old fool, Bill Potter, hab got de constable after us fo' highway robbery in de sebenteenth degree, an' dat ar constable am settin' on de water-barrel up at de house, jest waitin' ter snatch you bald-headed, honey."

Jimmy gave a low whistle.

"This here's hard-tack with stoned raisins," complained he; "but how did you get away?"

"Seed de debbil comin', and sorter extemporized dat he wanted me, so I jest laid down by the henhouse, an' played rooster till Mary Ann cum out an' tole me to clar out an' tell you 'bout tings," replied Pomp. "What'll dat gal ob mine say when she sees me ridin' in de Black Maria; jest tink ob it!"

"Oh, give us a holiday," answered Jimmy, jolly as a lark now that the first scare was over. "Did you tell Bob?"

Pomp grinned a grin that had the effect of a ray of sunshine on a blackboard.

"I gib dat pickaninny de gag," said he, "an' whar you s'pose dat he is now?—clar to de Lawd dat he is hid in de ash-barrel wid cinders up to his eyes."

"Is he scared?"

Pomp grinned again.

"He's so skeered dat youse could knock him over wid a sunbeam. Dat ar face ob his'n looks fo' all creation like a gravestone," he chuckled.

For a moment Jimmy considered, plans flitting in and out of his busy brain like rats in a garret, and by and by he said:

"Pomp, come along, and we'll go and get Bob. We've got to get into the house to-night. Where's dad?"

"De deacon am gone to take a hand in de prayer-meeting down to Cranberryville. Won't be home till to-morrow night."

"That's good; brace up, Pomp, and we'll make dat ere ham of a constable wish his mother had died afore she got married!"

Reassured by Jimmy's confident words and manners, Pomp followed him like a lamb, and in the course of ten minutes they succeeded in finding Bob.

Pomp hadn't told any fairy story about him, for he was hid in the ash-barrel; and after they dragged him out it was hard work to tell him from a cinder, for he was ashes from head to foot.

He looked as if a canary could scare him to death.

"Ginger!" cried he, staring at Jimmy and Pomp with eyes the size of codfish balls. "I thought that you two fellers were in prison."

"Nixey, Jim," replied Jimmy, using his favorite expression. "When dis ere apple-seed gets inter the jug you can use him to kill flies with. Want to come with us and make that constable that's boarding in the air up at my hen-roost sick?"

Did Bob want to go? You can bet an extensive fortune that he did.

"But how are you going to bounce the cuss without getting collared?" he inquired.

"We'll fix him some way," was Jimmy's cheerful answer; "hit him with the moon, if we can't do anything else!"

Bob laughed, and the procession moved on.

Upon nearing the deacon's house they stopped to reconnoitre.

Pomp played scout for this occasion only, and finally returned with the information that the constable was holding the fort on the front stoop.

"Hang him," muttered Jimmy, "the front door is the only one we can get in at; the rest are locked, and all the windows bolted."

Then he thought for a moment.

"By gum, boys, I've got it," whispered he, in elation. "Do you want to see that red sucker try to dig a hole in the stoop with himself?"

"Do we?" sarcastically replied Bob. "Would we like to find a gold mine in the back yard? Oh, no, of course not!"

"Well, watch me, and you'll see a little circus."

With these words Jimmy left his friends and stole cautiously along behind the rose and lilac bushes which lined the path until he reached the latticed end of the piazza.

If the constable had been on the alert he would easily have heard the young rascal, and caught him on the fly.

But he wasn't.

He was see-sawing between earth and dreamland, thinking of the time when he would get to be governor, and ride around in a gold-plated barouche.

So Jimmy warily clambered up the lattice work and reached the piazza roof, while Bob and Pomp gazed at him with wondering eyes, wondering what in the old Harry he meant to do.

They soon found out.

Right over the constable's head was a half-shell flower-garden, composed of a big red flower-pot, two or three pounds of dirt, and a lot of miscellaneous plants, the whole suspended by a stout string to a hook in the roof. This variety combination Mary Ann called her "hanging basket."

Opening his penknife, Jimmy selected the sharpest blade, laid himself down at full length on the roof, and with a dexterous thrust severed the hanging basket string.

Ker-slam came the whole arrangement on the constable's head.

He didn't even stop to put on his hat, but walked right down the steps on his head.

"Great Lord!" howled he, as he walked head over heels in the path, "it's a thunderbolt. Help! murder! fire! I'm a dead man!" and then he kicked at the stars with his feet, and tried to stand on his ear.

"Put for the door, boys!" yelled Jimmy, sliding down one of the porch pillars and giving the mussed-up officer of the law a kiss with his foot; "this 'ere chap's got the double-breasted cramps."

The two orphans by the gate didn't wait for cards of invitation to be sent to them.

They galloped up the path in a hurry, and skipped over the sprawling constable, until he became aware that it wasn't nightingales that were walking on him.

"Take dat, you mis'ble sinnah!" said Pomp, kicking him under the chin. "When dat you spy remember I."

"Poetry with the froth off," laughed Jimmy, holding open the front door. "Skip in; dat ere Turk will get feelin' better in a minute."

So the boys went in, piled chairs, and sofas, and pianos, and tea-cups, and every other available article up against the door, until nobody without a battering ram or a park of artillery could possibly enter, and then hired a private box in one of the parlor windows.

By and by the constable got up, and realized that he was all there. He felt mad.

In fact, he desired nothing better than the job of furnishing three fresh corpses for a public funeral.

For he at last realized that he had been badly sold by the very trio that he had been sent to arrest.

First he thought of making a fresh Fourth of July, by burning up the house and cremating the inmates; then he reflected upon the possibility of sending them up to Heaven by a can of nitroglycerine, but finally he concluded to capitulate.

With as much dignity as two bunged-up eyes and a bloated beet of a nose would allow, he went up and knocked on the door.

"Don't want any hairpins," came Jimmy's siren voice.

The constable swelled with indignation. "Who do you suppose that I am?" asked he, in an inquiring voice.

"Pocahontas."

"Billy Bedam, the button grinder."

"Mary Ann Gash!"

Such were the three intelligent answers that he received, followed by cries of:

"We've got all the soap we want." "Can't peddle clams here, old man." "Take the sewing machine somewhere else." "Go roll with the chromos."

The constable got purple.

"I'm the constable!" thundered he.

"Who told youse so, chile?" sweetly requested Pomp.

"The law, sir!"

"Tell de law dat it's a liar, an' if it says so, it's got to prove it!"

"I'll arrest you all—by Heaven!"

"Sho!"

"Yes, I will."

"Youse are joking—tellin' me 'bout crab-apples. Take out you teeefe, honey, an' come 'round in de mornin', an' I will kick dem in again fo' youse!"

That constable was not of cannibalistic propensities, yet he would have chewed Pomp's head off, wool and all.

"Let me in!" he roared; "I have a warrant for James Grimes."

"Gone ter the frog-banks to hunt fireflies," responded the cherub mentioned.

"And Robert Hoyt," continued the constable, disregarding the interruption.

"He's dead—shoving thunder-clouds for a livin'," assured Mr. Hoyt.

"And Pompey Julius Henry Clay Johnson," the constable finished, with a flourish.

"De las' genman hab gone to start a Freedman's washstand in Bulgaria," replied Pomp.

"That's stuff; you're all in there, and I want you. Remember, you'll get six months more for resisting an officer."

"Make it a year, an' chuck in an oil painting of the rising tide in the Alps," politely requested Jimmy. "We're young yet."

Fuming and fretting like a turkey-cock, the mad official roared:

"If you don't let me in right away, I'll knock the door down. I've got a search warrant."

"Did you have to search far for it?" suavely murmured Bob.

"Tell you what, old red head, you'd better train that brick-colored hair of yours up in the air, and go play comet."

This decidedly personal allusion did not make the gentleman to whom it was addressed feel any better-hearted.

His hair was of the strawberry-blond type, and strange to say, he was not at all stuck-up about it.

"You little devil, I'll have you imprisoned for life!" shouted he, banging away at the door with feet and hands combined.

"Don't make a noise, or else you'll wake the baby," gayly sung Bob, Jimmy seriously remarking a second afterward:

"Better go home and put on a chest-protector, old Muldoon, or you'll get sweaty, playing with dat door, an' ketch your death of dampness."

"I'll chest-protector you," threatened the Turnover minion of the law. "Open that door!"

"Take a tooth-pick and pick the lock," suggested Jimmy.

"Blow it open," added Bob.

But the constable did neither.

He was just enough excited not to care a darn for anybody or anything.

Going around to the woodshed, for he knew the deacon's premises like a book, he secured a particularly rugged appearing crowbar.

"I reckon that this will make that blarsted door surrender!" he growled, swinging it around in the air and wishing that he had Jimmy's head to drop it on.

Taking advantage of his absence, the conspirators in the parlor were holding a council of war.

"Let's chuck boiling water over 'im," advised blood-thirsty Bob.

"Shall I go out an' cut him libber out?" inquired Pomp, very valiant now that the enemy was out of sight.

"No," Jimmy counseled, "we don't want to do anything that will really hurt anybody, for we'll get a job at stone-breaking sure then. I guess that we had better get out of the back door while he is playing with the front. Wait till he gets back."

In a few moments "he" did get back.

He had his sleeves rolled up, his mouth wiped, and he meant business, as the wicked way in which he slung that crowbar alone proclaimed.

"Allow me to enter, or I will do so forcibly," he cautioned, spitting on his hands.

"Shut up; you're only gassing. You ain't got muscle enough to break down a hot house!" sneered Jimmy.

That settled it.

The constable went off two or three steps, leveled his weapon, and charged on the door.

A panel splintered, and a spittoon on the other side of the door went to the eternal chip-takers.

"'Bout time we skip," Jimmy said, as he heard the racket kicked up by the constable and the crowbar.

This was just what the rest of Helen's babies thought, and the three put for the back door.

They reached it and got out just as the front door succumbed, and its victorious subduer, hot and elated, appeared in the breach, thinking that he had got a dead sure thing on his young foes.

Much to his surprise, they weren't there, and he swung over the mixed-up barricade erected by the boys just in time to see them gallop out of the back exit.

"Stop, or I'll shoot!" bawled he, running after them.

Back came the taunting reply:

"Shoot him."

Then he flung his crowbar at the fugitives, but it struck a tree right before his nose, bounded back, and hit him in the stomach, and after the ten minutes which elapsed before he found out that his bowels hadn't left him, he concluded that there was no possible use of pursuing the runaways.

He was right there.

While he was holding a post-mortem examination on himself, Jimmy and friends had dusted down to Turnover, and were relating their adventures, very much exaggerated, to the usual evening gang of village boys who were sitting around Buffer's shut up store.

Of course the crowd all sympathized with them.

"That ere Constable Plunkett is a big, cow-headed duffer," said one.

"He's an old fool," remarked another. "Too darned fresh," said a third; "tried to stop our building fires on 'lection nights, and wouldn't let us go in swimming in the river till after dark."

So they talked about him until, boy-like, they felt that Constable Plunkett was a vile wretch whom it was a duty to plague and bother as much as they possibly could.

During the discussion Jimmy's roving eye caught sight of an old sugar barrel lying neglected alongside of the store.

For want of something better to do, Jimmy went to work and kicked the heads out.

"I'd like to give that penny constable a ride in that," said Bob, indicating the dismantled barrel.

"Ki, wouldn't he look lubly rollin' down hill in it," grinned Pomp.

"Here he comes now," cried one of the gang.

"Where?" asked Jimmy.

"Down the street."

Jimmy looked in the direction expressed. Sure enough the familiar hat and age-soiled coat of Constable Plunkett were apparent against the horizon, or rather a barn.

"You dassent ketch him and put him in the barrel," suddenly said a red-headed farmer's son, nearly appalled by the desperate boldness of the idea.

"If you fellers will help me, I bet you sixteen thousand dollars that I will," rejoined Jimmy, "or you can bat the stuffins out of me. What do you say?"

"Count me in," Bob answered, with the air of a blood-dyed buccaneer.

"An' me too, honey," was the reckless reply of Pomp; "mote as well git hung fo' an old ram as a young sheep."

"I'm there."

"So am I."

"Me too."

And the rest of the daring lads spoke out their willingness to enter into the proposed hurrah.

"Then bring along the barrel, and we'll give him a straw ride," commanded Jimmy. "See how he'll like sliding down the hill without any snow."

Away marched the boys, the barrel in their midst, toward the doomed and unconscious constable, who was walking soberly along.

Just here let us give the reader a point.

In reality the approaching individual was not Constable Plunkett. It was Deacon Grimes in the former's clothes.

But how came the metamorphosis? you may ask.

That is the prize conundrum that we intend to solve.

The deacon, after giving the Cranberryville prayer-meeting a good send-off, had concluded to return home with a worthy brother.

Said worthy brother had a gay and festive horse, which, when nearing Turnover, took it into his head to try and turn a backward somersault over the carriage.

The result was that both he and the carriage upset, and the deacon and his companion laid down in the road to quick music.

It was rough on the road, but it was rougher on the deacon, for his high plug looked as if an elephant had danced in it, and his coat was all ripped to Jerusalem.

Consequently, when the deacon got up and stopped blessing the playful brute who had caused all this damage, he went into the nearest house, which happened to be the constable's, and obtained a suit of the latter's clothes to walk home in.

But the boys did not, of course, know anything about his adventure, and took him, of course, for the Simon Pure constable.

And the first thing that the unfortunate deacon knew he got grabbed by the collar and the breastworks of his trousers, and had his hat unceremoniously banged down over his eyes.

"Stop!" he roared, hitting right and left; "what's the matter?"

His voice, though, coming in muffled tones from out the recesses of his damaged dicer, was unrecognizable, and the boys didn't mind it a bit.

"Hoist him up," Jimmy ordered.

In a second the deacon was lifted off his feet, and held anyhow in the air.

"Great prophet! Help—police!" he shrieked. "I'm being murdered!"

"Button up your lips," Bob valiantly requested, hitting the deacon a whack with an old broom that he had picked up, "or I'll clean your teeth with this."

"Mercy," moaned the deacon, not feeling quite sure whether it was tramps or pirates that had got hold of him.

"Got the barrel ready?" asked Jimmy.

"Yes," answered a boy.

"Then dance him into it; one—two—three!"

Ker-chuck went the deacon into the headless barrel, his hat tumbling off in the operation, and Jimmy raised his foot.

"Here's hoping dat yer may break your ugly old neck," said he, giving the barrel the first push.

"And may youse git lost in a mud hole, an' neber be fired out," wished Pomp, as his fairy foot struck oil.

Away went the barrel down the hill, the deacon howling, and the boys shouting at the top of their voices.

"Great ham bone," groaned the deacon, as his carriage bounced over a stone, "this is awful."

"So it is," conceded Bob, tickling his face with the broom. "Let me wipe the sweat off your face."

"Ten minutes for refreshments," cried Jimmy, as the barrel came to a momentary halt, and the deacon sprawled out into the road.

But Pomp had him in his equipage in a second.

"Git in, yer shabby ole peeler," he said, giving the deacon a shove, and starting the barrel anew.

CHAPTER XIII.

Suddenly it attempted to waltz over a stump.

The result was that it bobbed up, upset, and stood the deacon on his head, where he remained a minute and then rolled over to rest in a ditch.

As he did so, the moon, which had been secreting itself behind a cloud, shone out, and the dancing moonbeams lit up the deacon's face.

Jimmy's foot, uplifted for the purpose of kicking the deacon's pants somewhere around the neck, dropped down, and Jimmy's face looked as if somebody had struck it with an ax.

"Wha's the matter, chile?" asked Pomp, dancing up with the intention of filling in the road with the deacon.

"Look there!" gasped Jimmy, pointing at the prostrate man, and wishing that he was in his little bed.

Pomp gave one glance.

Then his jaws fell down in the vicinity of his knees, and his eyes started out from their sockets.

"Debbil take me!" groaned he, "if 'tain't the deacon!"

"Yes!" the deacon thundered, mad enough to eat blood-pudding, "it's me!" And, arising from his reposing place, he dug the ditch water out of his eyes, and continued, glaring around like a mad bull:

"What in the devil, God forgive me, does this blas—blessed thing mean?"

"We thought you was a cow!" faltered Bob, half scared to death.

The deacon fetched him a crack on the ear that made him imagine that a rainbow had fallen on him.

"Took me for a cow, hey? Likely story," roared the deacon. "Young man, you are going down the broad road that leads to destruction."

"I ain't—I'm going down the Turnover turnpike," retorted Bob, bracing up; and, suiting the action to the words, he sped down the road like a little flash of lightning.

Pomp thought that he would follow suit, and accordingly moved his gunboats slowly away.

But the deacon collared him.

"Where are you going?" he shouted.

"P—prayer-meeting," stammered Pomp.

"Another liar," grimly uttered the deacon, and inserting his fingers in Pomp's collar, he yanked that young coon into a parade-rest attitude.

"Now then," said he, "somebody has got to sweat for this. The idea of my being seized in the street, thrown into a barrel, and rolled down hill. Look at me."

"I'm a-casting my eyes at ye," pertly responded Jimmy, "and ye look like the tintype of a man escaping from a burnin' building. Somebody must have been shaving yer face with a curry-comb."

"That will do—no impudence," and Jimmy got a shaking that mixed his insides all together. "Just explain the thing, or I'll whip you till you have to get a pair of pillow-case pants to sit down in."

"Sit standing up, and take grub off the mantel-shelf," put in the irrepressible James.

But after the deacon had knocked the bark off of several trees with him, and smoothed the wrinkles out of his pants with a hickory switch, Jimmy did not feel quite so irrepressible, and was quite ready to explain.

His father listened to his explanation grimly.

"So you meant to put Constable Plunkett in the barrel?" he finally said.

"You bet!" responded Jimmy. "We didn't want to hurt him, though; only wanted to cripple him for a week or so."

"Dat's de bressed trufe," corroborated Pomp; "we jest wished ter see him break his lungs, or somethin' like dat, so dat he wouldn't be so fresh."

The deacon surveyed them in pious horror.

"You're two nice members of my family, are you not?" groaned he.

"Tip-top members!" was Jimmy's calm response. "Regular gold medal boys, an' yer order be bloated with pride of us, an' give us a silver-plated goat kerridge, an' a box of penny stinkers—hadn't he, Pomp!"

"Course, honey; but we isn't appreciated," confessed Pomp.

"I'll appreciate," said the deacon, in cast-iron tones. "Now start for home!"

Sadly and mournfully the funeral procession wended their way home, and when Jimmy got there he got warmed.

Not by a stove, but by a good, old-fashioned Connecticut blue law cat-o'-nine-tails.

The deacon laid it on thickly, and Jimmy was pretty sore when the matinee was over, creeping up to bed with a face on him as long as a monument.

"I'll get square," he murmured, as he snuggled down in the feather bed; "you can bet high on dat. If the old rooster don't get snatched barefooted for this here licking, you kill me with a fish ball."

Then he laid over, went to sleep, and dreamed that he was an angel with a white shirt and a tin harp, and that he was slowly roasting Constable Plunkett before a slow fire.

Next morning and all day through he was busily engaged in deep reflection.

Not about missionaries, or savages dressed in skin ulsters, or Mexican idols, or any other good things.

Oh, no.

All that our good little hero was thinking of was some plan to pay up accounts with his old man.

And at last he caught one on the fly.

It tickled him so that he forgot to hook more than two pounds of candy from Buffer's all the afternoon, and didn't touch the cinnamon drawer once.

"Oh, yum," whispered he, in sweet soliloquy, as he sat on the pork barrel and hugged himself with joy. "Won't I make the old rooster sick? Won't he wish dat he had been born dead? Just chalk dat down on your collar, and put it in de letter-box."

Bob dropped down in the early evening; the store did not close up until eight, and Jimmy unfolded his scheme.

"I'm going to make dad's hair stand straight up in the air," said he.

"How?"

"Bend down yer left cellar slow, and I'll tell yer."

Bob accordingly inclined downward an ear about the size of a large flapjack.

"Cats!" hissed Jimmy.

Bob's face was a study for a lithograph.

"Cats?" repeated he.

"Yes; now listen," and Jimmy gave him all the points of the proposed racket with the deacon, which will be fully explained further on in our story.

"Bully!" announced Bob, after a minute's consideration. "How many meows do you want?"

"'Bout eight. Get a club an an armful of bricks and go cat hunting. After you have scooped all you can, come up to the house."

So Bob got the necessary implements for the feline chase and started off.

About nine o'clock in the evening, Jimmy, who was standing at his front gate anxiously awaiting his chum's appearance, heard a most unearthly noise.

"Must be a thundering old murder or a menagerie broke loose," he reflected.

But it wasn't.

The noise grew nearer, and soon Bob's chubby face, dirty but triumphant, emerged from the shades of night.

Bob was not alone.

He was connected with a string, and said string was further connected with a soap-box on wheels.

"What have you got in ther gilded chariot?" Jimmy airily inquired.

"Cats," answered Bob, with a rueful air. "Ten of then; that is, if they're alive yet. Darned if they hain't been raising the old scratch on the way up. I'll bet seventeen cents that they've clawed one another up."

"Was it dem dat was rehearsing the Irish opera coming up the road?"

"Was it? Hang them, they couldn't have made more noise if they had had the kicking colic. If I ever go cat hunting again I hope I may die," and Bob emphatically wiped the dirt from his amiable countenance.

"Open the private box," commanded Jimmy. "Hold on, though; dey might give us de grand bounce."

"Nixey," returned Bob; "they're all tied together by their tails. Dump 'em out!"

Jimmy kicked off the soap-box lid.

Immediately ten of the worst looking scratched-up and fur-ruffled cats tumbled out in a mixed-up heap on the ground and started to run away.

But as each cat was connected with some other cat, the experiment was a terrible failure, and they returned to the pleasant pastime of making the fur fly, all the while shrieking like fiends with the stomach ache.

"This won't do," said Jimmy, watching them. "Dey'll raise all the cemeteries for miles around, an' skip de skeletons out with the idea that it's the end of the world. Just chuck them back in the barouche, an' we'll fix 'em when we get to the barn."

The cats were accordingly chucked back into the soap-box and dragged to the barn.

"We only want seven," said Jimmy, letting the rest strike for their firesides and their homes. "Anyhow, Bob, I'm blamed glad that I'm going to get something on a string;" and he proceeded to attach one end of a long bit of twine to the tail of every cat.

"Shall the circus commence?" asked he of Bob.

"Is the old man making love to his bed?" returned that rascal.

"Yes; got the paralysis in his right tooth, and been to bed most all day, playing with creosote and hop poultices, and having lots of fun all by himself."

"Mad then, ain't he?"

"Mad—I should smile! He's mad enough to eat tooth-pick pudding."

"The cats won't make him feel any more like praying, then."

"Nixey, Jim; but come, let's start the promenade concert."

"Shall we take Pomp?"

"Hang Pomp; he'd get laughing an' fall off the roof, an' muss the walk up with dead nigger flesh."

Securing their cats, the boys first stole into the yard and tied two big Toms on to the clothes-line by their tails.

"Oh, wow! meow! vuch!" wailed one, digging his companion in misery in the eye with his claws.

"Wab—wah! Mari-er-er!" answered the stricken one, trying to scratch out his assailant's heart.

Thus they kept up the racket until the deacon, dozing uneasily in his chamber, heard the hurrah.

"Cats," groaned he, rising up in bed and listening. "Fighting, too, damn 'em!"

"Yoh-ah-ah! Mewow-wow-wow!" came from the fighting felines, as they clawed and hugged one another on that clothes-line.

The deacon got mad.

"To think that the fust bit of sleep that I have had to-day should be disturbed by those infernal cats," he complained. "I've got a good mind to throw something at them if they don't stop."

They didn't stop.

The serenade continued, and the deacon rose up in wrath and clutched the water-pitcher.

"I hope it will kill them," he vindictively uttered, as he threw up the window and prepared to knock the musicians' dead with the pitcher.

The boys, hidden in the lilacs in the yard, perceived the deacon's window slowly opening.

"He's going to fire something," suggested Bob.

"Let him fire," Jimmy replied; "he ain't got as much muscle as a catbird, and it will do him good to get a little exercise."

Just then the deacon launched his pitcher at the operatics.

But he wasn't a good shot.

He couldn't hit a barn door with a brick house, much less hit a cat with a water-pitcher.

Consequently, the missile whizzed through the air and hit Jimmy on the ear.

That ear's owner had probably lost a cent, for he laid right down on the ground to look for it.

"What's the matter?" chuckled Bob, feeling as if he wanted to take off all of his clothes so that he could laugh more.

"What's the matter?" repeated Jimmy, ruefully rising. "Ain't much the matter, except that I've lost both of my ears, and my nose is down my stomach. I like to get hit by a water-pitcher that weighs about a ton. If I had a brass head and a wooden face, I wouldn't care."

"Well, don't mind," counseled Bob, "the deacon feels worse than you do. Just hear those cats; guess that they're winding up on the doxology."

The deacon evidently imagined so too, for he slammed up that window again as if it were made of rubber, and flung one of his boots out.

"Will you shut up?" roared he.

"Wah—wah, meowow," shrieked the clawing couple, swaying and swinging on the line.

Bang! came the other boot, followed by a fire-shovel and a coal-scuttle.

This unexpected bombardment seemed to scare the cats, for they stopped their singing all at once.

Thinking that he had settled their hash, the deacon drew down the window and crawled back to bed.

"Blast the cats," mumbled he, drawing the blanket over him, "and blast this blasted toothache. If that imp of mine ain't home early to-night, I'll tan his hide."

With this paternal reflection he put his old bald head under the cover and tried to go to sleep.

Meanwhile Jimmy and Bob had not been idle.

Leaving the two orphans on the clothes-line to fight it out, the boys took the remaining five in their arms, and started to go noislessly up-stairs to the roof.

They didn't make any noise.

"Oh! no!

First Bob fell over the hatrack in the hall, and knocked the stuffings out of the deacon's Sunday hat; then Jimmy tripped on a baluster and went downstairs again, and finally one of the cats got away, entangling the string to which she was fastened around Bob's feet. He stumbled, clutched at Jimmy, and with noise enough for a boiler manufactory in active operation, the whole gang rolled to the foot of the stairs.

"If dat don't bring the old man down on us like a squad of artillery, you can crush me with a hair," mournfully uttered Jimmy, picking himself up carefully.

"Most likely he'll think that it is burglars, and shoot us full of holes," Bob surmised, choking a rebellious tabby to keep her from howling bloody murder.

But the deacon did not appear. He had heard the racket, but just as he started down to investigate the matter, his aching molar began putting in some fine touches, and inside of a minute he was dancing the glide waltz around the room, consigning his tooth to perdition.

Why just then the boys might have fired off a cannon and he would not have cared a red cent.

"Don't believe he heard us," said Jimmy, after a pause.

"He must be dead, then, or else he hears with his feet," Bob replied. "We made noise enough to wake a stone man."

"We'll go ahead, anyhow, and if he collars us we can tell him that we're going to start a Sunday-school with the cats," laughed Jimmy, once more beginning to step Heavenward.

Bob followed, and no obstacle intervening, they at last reached the roof.

It was one of the moon's working nights, and she was out in full force—mountains and all.

Therefore the boys had all the light they wanted for their mischievous purpose.

Jimmy's plan of operations was this:

Selecting a cat, he laid down on his stomach and extended his face and hand over that edge of the roof underneath which the deacon's window lay.

Bob followed his example, and laid alongside of him.

He, too, had a cat, string-tied.

"Ready?"

"Yes."

"Let her rip."

Down went the two cats, dangling from the string until they reached the deacon's window.

"Hold 'em dere," ordered Jimmy, lowering a third back fence rounder with his left hand.

The deacon had just conquered his tooth, and was bracing up on a little old Tom gin, when the cats arrived outside of his apartment.

He was soon aware that they were there.

They didn't send a footman around with their cards, or anything like that, but simply announced in an aria that it was them.

Their lungs were lined with brass, and if they didn't kick up the worst old noise, caroming now and then against the window panes, nothing ever did.

It almost paralyzed the deacon at first.

"Great ham bones!" he ejaculated, "what in the name of the Lord can be the matter? Christopher Columbus, what a horrible din!"

The cats kept it up.

They sung in all languages, called one another liars, said their prayers backward, and finally combined in a grand assault against the window, smashing a glass.

The deacon started back.

"If it ain't those devilish cats, I'm a fool," said he. "But how in the angel Gabriel did they get up by the window?"

The angel Gabriel not making any reply, the deacon concluded that he would have to find out himself.

So he stuck his head out of the window.

It was a bad move.

Instantly every blessed cat went for the deacon's head, and commenced to scalp him alive.

They dug out his hair, clawed his ears, tickled him under the chin, drew war maps all over his face, and otherwise pelted him.

Jimmy and Bob enjoyed the fun, we can tell you.

They laid on that roof, worked the cats with the strings, and felt that they were having an ocean steamship full of fun without charge.

"Ain't he a-ketching it?" grinned Jimmy, as one fierce cat tried to yank the deacon's head off.

"Boiling hot!" was Bob's answer. "Just hear him giving the cats good advice."

Still, it didn't sound much that way.

The deacon was swearing worse than P'omp's parrot, and was engaged in a hand-to-hand contest with his four-footed foes.

He wanted to get back into his room, but the cats didn't want him to.

They were sociable, and they hated to see anybody tear themselves away from their society.

So they tried to persuade him to stay by scratching him on the nose, and kissing him on the cheeks with their hind legs.

The deacon bit and struck and swore, but his enemies stuck to him like wax.

"Great Lord! I'll be all ground up; torn into bits!" he howled. "Darnation dam cats. In the air, too. How in thunder did they get there? Cats haven't wings. Take that, you fiend!" and he gave a cat a rap that made her all out of joint.

As he did so, his hand became entangled in a string.

A flood of light shot across his perplexed brain.

Glancing up, he caught sight of the laughing faces of Jimmy and Bob peering down at him.

With a desperate effort he succeeded in freeing himself, and beat a hurried retreat into his room, while the cats started a Portuguese hymn of triumph with variations.

The deacon, to relate the truth, was slightly incensed.

If Jimmy and Bob had appeared before him in ten dollar coffins with cents on their eyes, he would have been glad of it.

"I'll fix them," he muttered, getting into his pantaloons. "The idea of them daring to play a second trick on to me. S'pose that they enjoyed seeing the old man getting massacred; thought that it was fun. I'll show them fun, confound them for two impish, unlucky, mischievous young devils."

Putting on his coat, he picked up his cane.

It was a solid cane, and it looked bad and wicked—as if it would love to cut into boy's flesh.

With a grim smile the deacon grasped it, swished it once or twice at an imaginary figure, and then stole softly upstairs.

Totally unaware of the fact that they had been discovered, and that a Nemesis was on their track, Jimmy and Bob were lying off on that roof, shaking with laughter.

"Didn't he cuss!" chuckled Bob.

"Blue blazes and brimstone," answered Jimmy. "He's a sweet old chromo for a church member."

"How them cats did walk all over him!"

"You're right. I'll bet that his face looked as if it had been struck by a hail storm."

"Or been used for a rifle range. Tell you what, Bob, I guess he'll let me alone for awhile. I'm little, but I've got a hard heart."

"How he did wobble around," said Bob, laughing afresh at the recollection of the deacon's antics.

"Just like a fish-worm with convulsions," squealed Jimmy. "I expect he thinks I'm snoozing away in bed like a little lamb."

"Will he?" came in stentorian tones, and Jimmy turned around in startled affright just in time to catch the cane on his beam erds.

"Collared again," yelled he, as he took in the deacon's familiar form.

"Yes, young man, you are, and you're going to get it red-hot this time. Make an ass of your father, hey?" and the cane played tick-tack all over Jimmy.

By and by, though, the deacon's arm got tired.

"There," he exclaimed, as he flung the lads from him, "the next time you have a hurrah, don't forget to count me in. Now, go to bed."

With the last command the deacon wended his way downstairs.

"After all," he soliloquized, "I don't think that I got the worst of that little joke. The old man's game yet, so don't you forget it."

As for Bob and Jimmy, they went to bed without saying their prayers or singing their evening hymn.

They didn't feel much like it.

CHAPTER XIV.

One day Buffers went off and left Jimmy in charge of the store.

There was nothing much to do, and Jimmy spent most of his time at the door, mashing all the pretty girls, and smoking one of the boss's best cigars.

While thus occupying himself he observed a lady slip on a piece of suet that somebody had carelessly thrown into the street.

This put a grand idea in Jimmy's head.

Then he went into the store, got a roll of butter, and commenced operations.

Going down on his hands and knees, he rubbed the store stoop from beginning to end with the butter, rendering it a great deal more slippery than ice.

"Nobody won't fall down on dat," chuckled he; "nobody won't sit right down on their head, an' try ter kick the sunlight off their feet. Oh, no, dey'll lay right down ter see how much the butter is a pound."

Presently he heard a mournful whistle—a whistle which sounded as if it belonged to a hearse coming around the corner.

"Bob," grinned Jimmy. "I kin tell dat whistle of his full a mile off! it allus paralyzed all the hens—gives dem de spine disease."

Sure enough, it was Bob.

"Where yer been?" inquired Jimmy.

"Chesnutting."

"Have any fun?"

"Lots—fell in the brook, licked two fellers, got a black eye, got hooked by a bull, throwed a brick at a cat and knocked your old man's hat off, found most a pint of chestnuts, an' was raced by a nigger. Tell yer what, you ought to have been along," and the unsuspicious Bob stepped upon the stoop.

He took a step forward, slipped, and then there was a panorama of a thunderstruck boy with a very white face turning a double somersault and roosting on his ear.

"Got the jams?" asked Jimmy, with every appearance of intense surprise.

Bob didn't answer.

He had a faint idea that it was the end of the world, and if he looked up at the sky long enough he'd see the angels coming out. But he gave it up after looking about ten seconds, perceiving that nobody else was getting struck by lightning, and he felt astonished and mad enough to drink somebody's heart's blood.

"Practicin' for the circus?" queried Jimmy, "or is it corns? You're a nice gumdrop, ain't you, coming around here and playing water-wheel on the store stoop. I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself."

Darned if I know what made me fall," stammered Bob, attempting to rise, and immediately falling back again.

"Got grease on your canal-boats?" jeered Jimmy. "You must have sweat clear through your shoes."

With a dismayed expression on his moon-like face, Bob examined the stoop.

"By Christopher Jimcrack," he exclaimed, "some hare-lipped monkey has put butter all over this stoop."

Jimmy put on an innocent mug.

"Giving me saleratus on a spoon, ain't you?" demanded he. "Butter on the stoop? Go away; you're dreaming."

"I ain't," stoutly persisted Bob, as he arose with as much cau-

tion as if he had been formed of glass. "Some son of a heathen Chineese has greased the stoop, an' I look as if I had been bathing in a butter-tub. Oh, wouldn't I like to see him."

"See who?"

"The fresh galoot that did it."

"I'm the peanut that fixed that ere stoop," he declared, "and if you don't like it, just hit me. I'm little, but I'm tough. Just chalk dat down on yer collar."

Bob's manner instantly changed.

Jimmy could chaw him into gum in five minutes, and Bob knew it. Therefore, he got his back down again, and contented himself with growling out:

"That's a real mean way to treat a pal, ain't it? S'pose that I'd broke my neck?"

"'Twould have saved the hangman a soft job," laughingly replied Jimmy. "But brace up, Bob, here comes Dominie Ham. Watch and see him take a tumble."

The dominie was going to hang up the grocer's slate for a half pound of cheese, but the greasy stoop caused it to slip his mind.

He slipped up, slid seven or eight feet, said something he would not want to put in his sermon, and went away all broken up.

Then along came a maiden lady of uncertain age, who was the boss scandal monger of the village.

The gyrations she went through when she struck that stoop would have put a contortionist to the blush, and at the end of her high kicking she sat down with force enough to split a plank.

She went away after giving Jimmy a good large slice of her mind, and then the imp and Bob got on the watch for other victims.

There were several of them, and they came in a bunch, like troubles or invitations to show when you've got to attend a funeral.

First came Squire Squibbs, from the store where he had been making most extensive purchases, putting them in a regular jumbo of a market basket, instead of having them sent home.

Then along came Pomp in time to see the squire slip up, go down like a landslide, for he was no feather-weight, and scatter his groceries all over the lot.

Then, as luck would have it, along came Buffers himself, from over the hill, and he and Squibbs got into an argument which ended in a rough and tumble fight on the grass plot.

The boys enjoyed it all right, for it was a regular three ring circus, band wagon, pink lemonade, and a concert after the show to them.

However, right in the midst of the scrap, out came the deacon and Jimmy never knew that he was in the store or within forty rods of it.

The deacon stopped the fight and wanted to know what it was all about.

Squibbs accused Buffers of greasing the stoop, Buffers swore up and down that he didn't, and the fight would have begun all over again if the deacon had not smelled a mice.

"James, did you do it?" he asked.

Now Jimmy was not a liar, and he acknowledged the corn.

Buffers discharged him, and said he'd like to tan his hide for him.

The deacon attended to that part of the contract.

He did it to the limit, and until his switch was in shreds, and then he sent Jimmy to bed, although it was only four o'clock in the afternoon, and a bright breezy day at that, just when a boy could enjoy himself most.

Jimmy stood it as long as he could, and finally he made up his mind to run away.

He got out of bed, put on his Sunday clothes, and his best hat, put a clean paper collar, and a broken winded pistol in his pocket and stole out.

Everything was quiet in the house, and he got out without being seen, went to the station, got the ticket distributor to give him a pasteboard to New York on the deacon's account and shook the dust of the village from his feet.

He got to New York all right, but what he did there is another story, and so for the present, here is an end to the funny adventures of THE DEACON'S SON.

THE END.

Read "OLD GRIMES' BOY; OR, JIMMY AND HIS FUNNY CHUMS," which will be the next number (38) of "Snaps."

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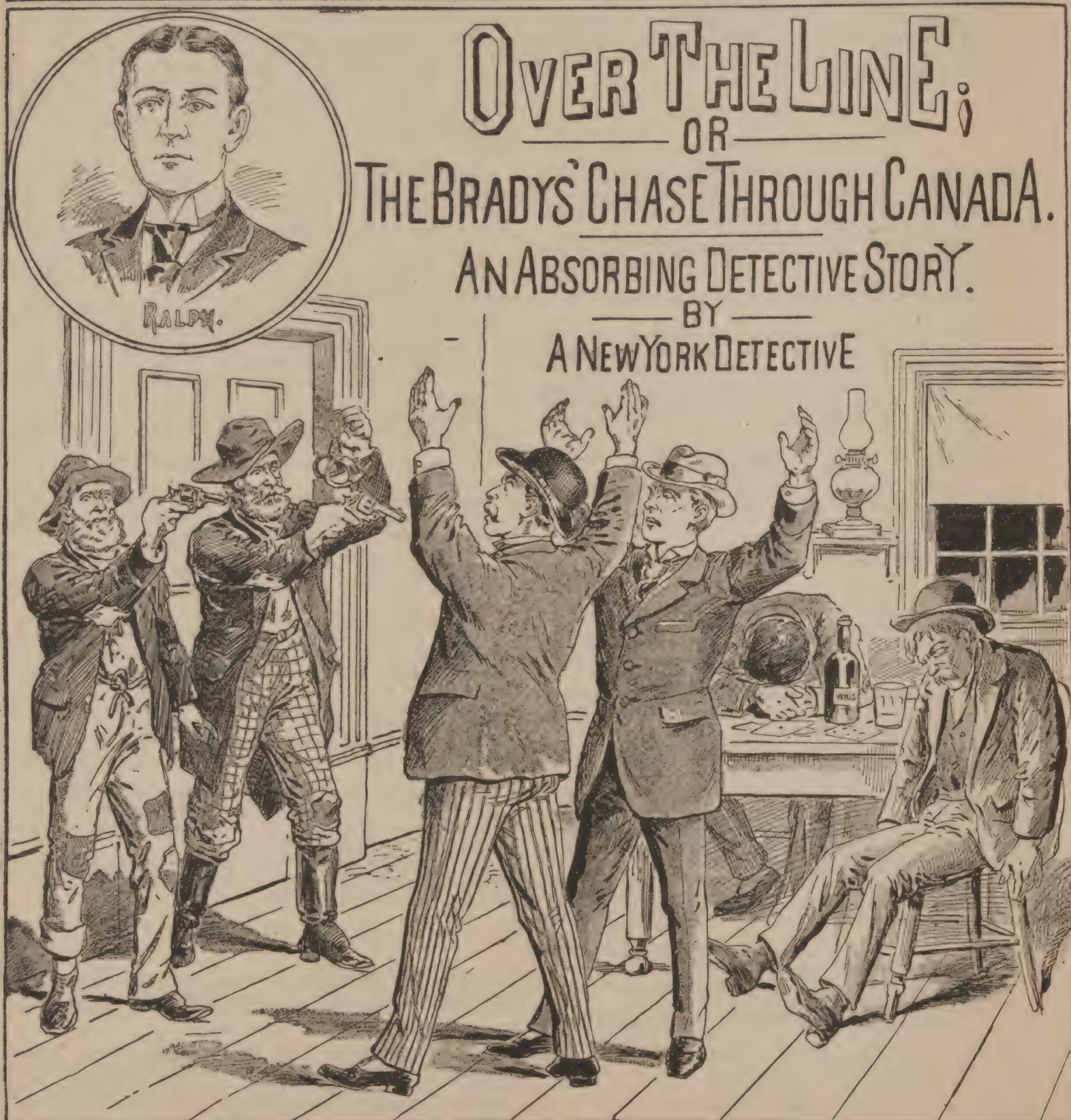
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No. 73.

NEW YORK, JUNE 15, 1900.

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